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, by Lydia L. Rouse**

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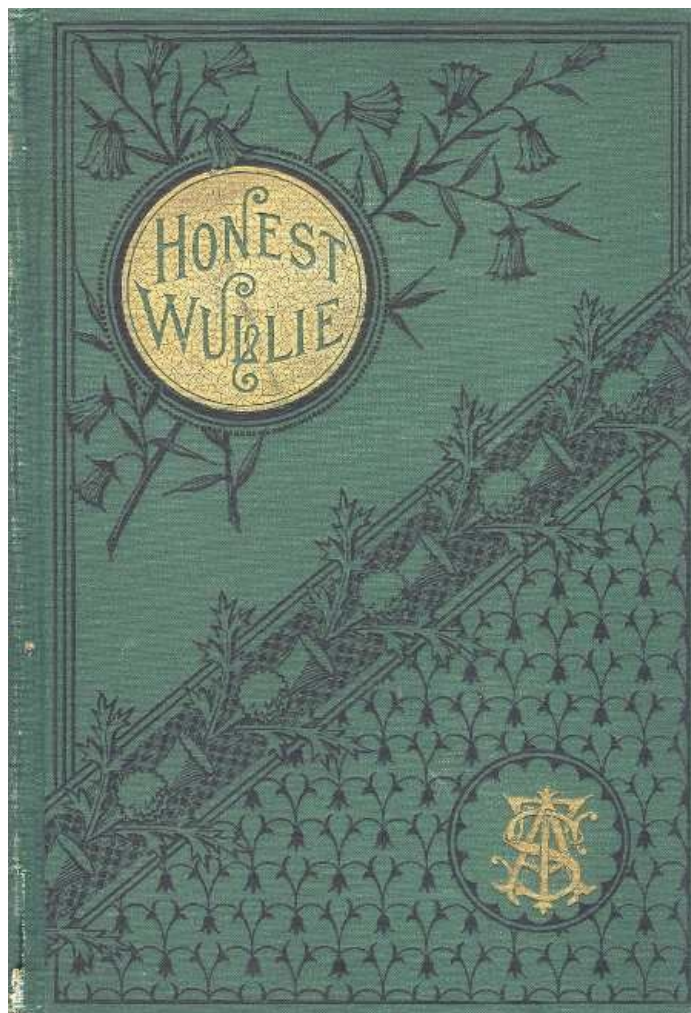
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PATTERSON'S STORY ***





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HONEST WULLIE.

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BY

LYDIA L. ROUSE,

AUTHOR OF "SANDY'S FAITH," AND "JIM BENTLEY'S RESOLVE."



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**CHAPTER I.
WULLIE AND RAB.**

Among the hills that divide the county of Ayr from Kirkcudbright, and near the bonny Doon, lived, in the early part of this century, a man named William Murdoch, but who was called by all his neighbors "honest Wullie." He was a farm-laborer, and lived alone in a cottage which he rented. He feared God and regarded man. His word was indeed as good as his bond. He had been called honest Wullie while yet a boy, and by common consent he still retained the name. At the time our story opens he was about thirty-five years of age.

It was the morning of the first of January. The departing year had robed the earth in spotless white, that its successor might behold nothing but beauty and purity, and might begin its course with gladness. The rough places were made smooth and the waste places concealed. The sun shone brightly, and the earth glittered and sparkled as if nature had purposely arrayed herself in jewelled robes to welcome the coming year. But men looked out upon the frozen earth and saw only wastes of snow, and began to cut their way through it that they might look after their cattle and all that belonged to them. While all other hands were busy, Willie Murdoch's were not idle. He was shovelling paths about his door, and, while so employed, his thoughts were running in this manner.

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"I suppose I shall hae to look after that ne'er-do-weel brither o' mine. A man canna let his ain brither suffer, even if it s'ould be through his ain faut. Rab was aye a careless lad. He s'ouldna hae married without changing his ways. Hoo did he suppose he would support a wife and weans! He aye depends o'er muckle on me." While he was thus mentally soliloquizing his brother appeared, struggling through the snow.

"Weel, Wullie, ye are aye warking; ye are o'er industrious."

"A man canna sit in the hoose and be snawed in. Hae ye no made paths aboot your ain door?"

"I didna feel the courage to do it, the snaw is that deep. I am a'maist beat oot wi' coming here."

"What brings ye oot on sic a morning? Are ye no all weel at hame?"

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"We are all weel, I am thankful to say, but I am in trouble aboot the rent. Ye ken it is due, and I hae na made oot to save it. I am sair set upon to pay it, and I cam to ask if ye could gie me a helping hand."

It seemed but natural for Robert to ask this help. As his brother had said, he depended on Willie. The two were all that were left of their family, or, rather, of two families; for, though brothers by adoption and affection, they were in reality cousins. Willie's parents had died when he was but a few months old, and his mother's only sister, then lately married to a brother of Willie's father, had taken the orphaned little one and brought him up as her own child. He had repaid her with all the devotion of a loving and thoughtful son; and on her death-bed she had given him, then only fifteen years of age, the charge of Robert, who was six years younger. Her other children had died in infancy, and she had been a widow several years.

"Wullie, ye are a douce lad, for ane o' your years," she had said. "Ye maun aye hae a care o' your brither, and if he doesna get on weel in the warld, dinna spare to lend him a hand. And may the gude God guide you both."

Willie had never forgotten the injunction of his foster-mother, which seemed to him doubly binding from the peculiar character of their relationship. He had had too much care of his brother, in fact, to the manifest detriment of both; for Robert was sadly deficient in self-reliance, and Willie's hard-earned money was too often applied to the support of his brother's family. So when this new demand was made, Willie, with a perplexed look, leaned upon his shovel and remained a moment silent and thoughtful. At length he spoke.

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"I dinna see what is to be dune. I am sair straitened for siller mysel'."

"Weel, if ye dinna see a way I canna tell what is to become o' us. I thought I could coont on you to help me out o' my trouble."

"Ye hae coonted on me o'er mony times for the gude o' my purse," said Willie, half in jest and half in earnest; for he had always said to himself, "I can never find it in my heart to be hard upon Rab." "But come into the hoose, Rab," continued he; "we will talk aboot it, and see if there is ony way to mend matters. I hae a few p'un's laid by for ony case o' emergency; but I would be loath to break in upon that just noo. Ye s'ould wark better and plan better. I dinna want to be hard upon you, but ye maunna forget that ye are na longer a laddie, but a man, and a husband and father forbye. I will help you this ance, but I canna be always ready to meet your obligations at a moment's warning. I hae been casting aboot in my ain mind, for some time, whether it wouldna be better to tak ye a' in wi' me, sin' ye are maistly no prepared on rent days. The hoose is sma'; that is ane thing against it; and I hae sa long lived in quiet that it might be hard at first to become accustomed to the prattle o' the bairns; but if you choose to come, you will be welcome."

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This generous offer had cost Wullie no little self-sacrifice. He had lived alone since Robert was married, and he liked that way of living. "He could mak his ain parritch, and help himsel' amazin' weel," as his neighbors said. His wants were few and simple. He went to his labor each morning, and returned in the evening. As he left his house, so he found it; but how would it be if he opened his door to his brother's family? This is what he often thought about, and for this reason he had hesitated to propose the subject to Robert. But it was becoming a serious matter to pay so much for rent, for he almost always had it to pay for both cottages. Besides, hardly a week passed that he did not carry or send something to relieve the necessities of Robert's family. Having made the proposition, he watched to see how it would be received.

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Robert's face brightened at first; then a shadow overspread it as he thought that, if he were in his brother's house, he could not conceal from him the fact that he was often out at night, and in bad company. So he sat trotting his feet, with his eyes on the floor, and made no reply.

"Hoo would that please you, Rab?" asked Wullie, after a long silence.

"I would be almost ashamed to accept sic a favor. Then, too, I might feel mair bound to think like yoursel' about mony things that I hae my ain opeenion about."

"Hoo is that, Rab? Ye dinna want to do wrang, I hope; or do you think I hae na sense to judge what s'ould be accounted wrang? If you do what is right, we will hae na difference o' opeenion. It is time ye had your wild oats a' sown. A man s'ould think mair aboot wark and less aboot diversion."

"Ilka ane canna think like yoursel', Wullie."

"Ilka ane s'ould consult duty before pleasure, Rab."

"A' folk dinna see duty in the same light. But we will mak na mair words aboot that. If Jeannie has na objections, we will accept your kindness and be thankful for it."

This he said to cover his own hesitancy, for he well knew that his wife would be glad of any change that would insure for herself more comforts and fewer cares. Her daily life was harassed by the all-absorbing questions, "What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

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Robert for once hastened home to tell Jeannie the good news. As may be supposed, her necessitous circumstances overcame her pride, and she readily consented to a proposition which would lessen her anxieties; for she was a sensible, well-meaning woman, and was much pained at her husband's want of thrift. "Wullie was aye a douce, honest man," said she, as she made hasty preparations to leave her comfortless home. There was little to pack and little to move; and before night closed in upon the short day, Robert and his family were brought by a kind neighbor to his brother's door. Wullie heaved a sigh of regret for past quiet, and hastened to welcome the pale, careworn woman to her new home.

Tears of gratitude stood in Jeannie's eyes as she crossed the threshold. She extended her hand to Wullie, and endeavored to express her thanks; but sobs choked her utterance, and she burst into tears.

"Ye maunna greet, woman; ye are mair than welcome. Sit down by the fire, and warm yoursel' and the bairns," said Wullie in the kindest tones.

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Jeannie sat down and soon regained her composure. Then she arose, and began to place and put in order the few things she had brought with her. This done, she returned to the fire where Wullie was preparing the evening meal. She assisted in arranging the table, and soon they sat down to a frugal but substantial supper.

After the repast was finished, Robert went to pay his rent. Jeannie busied herself about the house for a while; then she put the children to bed, and sat down to her usual evening occupation, knitting.

Wullie did not as usual get his Bible; he sat on the opposite side of the room and watched Jeannie's nimble fingers and listened to the clicking of her needles.

"Jeannie, ye are o'er pale and thin; are ye no weel?" he asked.

"I maistly think I am weel; but whiles I misdoot it. I think laneliness has had muckle to do wi' my ill looks. I was reared in a large family, and I canna but feel the change. Then Rab has a way o' gaen oot in the evening, and I am all alane, savin' my sleepin' bairns; and it is weary waitin', for he is lang a-comin'. I doot if he would like me to tell you, but lately I hae suffered bath laneliness and fear."

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"O Jeannie, ye s'ould hae tauld me before. I didna ken he was gaen that gate."

"Weel, I hae tauld ye noo, and I hae a purpose in tellin' ye. I want ye to look after him. He willna heed me, but perhaps he will heed you."

Wullie was about to reply when they heard a footstep, and Robert entered.

"Weel, Rab, ye are square ance mair," said his brother cheerily, though his own small store was much smaller on that account.

"Ay am I, thanks to yoursel', Wullie."

"I am right glad we hae stoppit rent-payin' for ane o' the places. Noo, if ye stick to wark as ye s'ould, ye will get on in the world better than ye hae been doing. I will seek a gude place for ye the neist year. If ye are wullin' to wark weel, I hae na doot but ye can wark wi' me. Farmer Lindsay will need anither man in the spring, and ye would do better on a farm than wi' your hedging and ditching. With him ye would hae every kind o' wark in its season; and if ye wark as weel as ye ken hoo, ye will hae wark the hail year round, and nae trouble in gien satisfaction. We will hae to look weel to oor affairs, and then I see na reason why we s'ouldna gather comforts about us. I will get a coo; it willna cost muckle to keep her, and the milk will be gude for the bairns. And we'll hae to fatten a couple o' swine. I hae had naebody but mysel' to feed, and I hae been sa strang and weel that anything would do me. But your wife and bairns need mair than I hae needed. I dinna like to see them sa thin and pale."

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A cry from one of the children attracted Jeannie's attention, and she left the room.

"It canna be, Rab, that they hae na been weel keepit," he continued. "Plenty o' aiten meal would mak them look better than they do."

Rab was confused, and did not reply. He could not look into the clear gray eyes of honest Wullie and tell him that a part of his wages went to the innkeeper, that he often treated a set of idle, jolly fellows with the money that should have given bread to his family. So he only said, "Jeannie has never complained o' her fare."

"Weel, Rab, the pale cheek will sometimes tell o' suffering when the tongue refuses to speak o' it. I dinna say it is so in Jeannie's case; ye ken that best yoursel'."

"Wullie, ye are o'er plain o' speech. Ilka ane wouldna tak it frae ye."

"I am plain-spoken, Rab. I never say yea when I mean nay; neither do I stand about tellin' a freend his fauts when ony gude can come o' it. 'Faithful are the wounds o' a freend,' ye ken."

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"That may be; but sic talk maistly sits too snug to fit weel. Ye are ca'ed honest Wullie, and ye cam as honestly by the name through your plain, outspoken way as by your fair dealing."

"Weel, I am no ashamed o' the name, however I cam by it."

Jeannie's return changed the conversation to some other subject.

CHAPTER II. THE NEW HOME.

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The next morning was the Sabbath. Of course honest Wullie was at home on that morning. It was a strange thing for him to have children in his house. But his face brightened as little Jamie's curly head and happy face appeared, and instinctively he extended his hand. "Come to me, come to your uncle, my wee man," he said in winning tones.

The child approached him rather slowly, and suffered himself to be lifted to his uncle's knee. Soon the broad palm of honest Wullie was stroking Jamie's head, and from that time Uncle Wullie's knee was the child's favorite seat. The other child was a mere babe, a sweet, delicate little girl, named Isabel, whom Wullie always called "the wee lass." This child he did not at first attempt to take, for she was "sic a wee bit thing," he said, he would be "a'maist sure to let her fa'."

There was soon a decided improvement in Rab's family. The children grew plump and rosy, and the mother lost the pale, sad look. Rab seldom went to town, and when he did he returned early. His wife began to breathe more freely; she inwardly felt that Wullie's influence would save her husband.

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Spring came, and with it a change of labor for Robert Murdoch. His brother secured employment for him on Mr. Lindsay's farm, as he had proposed. Jeannie now moved about the house with a light step and a lighter heart. The cottage too was undergoing a change; not under the carpenter's hand, but under the skilful, remodelling hand of a woman. The bareness was less apparent. In the best room were a chest of drawers and a clock, the only heirlooms Jeannie possessed. The windows were curtained, some of the rough chairs and unsightly stools were cushioned; here was a small mirror, and there a bright pincushion and housewife. The cradle, too, with its many-colored covering and tiny pillow, and little Isabel's sweet face half hidden in it, made the cottage seem more like a home. True, there was no elegance or beauty, but there was a change; for honest Wullie had considered his home furnished when he had a bed, a table, a few chairs, shovel and tongs, parritch-pot, and bake-kettle. As to time, he could always tell that by the crowing of the cock or the position of the sun. He was so accustomed to these methods of telling time that he seldom needed to look at the noon-mark cut in the south window. But Wullie appreciated the change that had taken place, and smiled approvingly. He even went so far as to say, "It taks a woman's hand to mak hame tidy." He began to perceive that he had received as well as afforded comfort by opening his door to others.

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Quickly passed the spring and summer seasons. On warm afternoons Jeannie often sat in the pleasant cottage door sewing on some pretty garments for the little ones who were playing at her feet. She had watched the budding trees with unusual interest, for the new life in nature seemed to harmonize with her own fresh hopes. Her heart was again blithe and hopeful, and as the birds carolled their notes of joy, she too sang old songs of love and happiness. But hers was a happiness founded on the constancy of frail humanity. Alas, that cannot always be trusted.

CHAPTER III. DAFT JAMIE'S.

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About two miles from the cottage was a small inn and dramshop familiarly known as Daft Jamie's. The nominal proprietor was James McAllister, but the house was kept by his wife; for, many years before, McAllister had been so badly injured in a drunken brawl that he had never fully recovered his reason, and had ever since borne the name of Daft Jamie. This was a place of resort for all the idlers of the neighborhood, who came here to gossip and drink and empty their pockets into Mrs. McAllister's money-drawer. Rab well knew the road to this place, but since he had brought his family to his brother's house he had kept away from it.

One evening late in autumn Robert Murdoch failed to come home as usual. As the evening advanced Jeannie's fears fast deepened into certainty; but she concealed her anxiety as well as she could and endeavored to appear cheerful.

Wullie had no fears concerning his brother. He sat down near the fire, preparing to doze until Rab should return; but before he was lost in slumber Jeannie broke the silence by remarking that the night was dark, and it was a long way to Daft Jamie's.

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"What puts Daft Jamie's into your heid?" said Wullie. "Surely Rab is no there. He is crackin' wi' Donald McPherson or some o' the neebors. Dinna worry yoursel'. Gang to your bed, and I'll wait for Rab."

But Jeannie did not go to bed. She resumed her work and relapsed into silence.

Again Wullie settled himself into an easy posture and succeeded in falling asleep. The unhappy wife still listened for the footsteps of her husband, but all the sound she heard was the heavy breathing of the weary man in the chimney-corner. After another hour had passed she again roused the sleeper.

"I am right sorry to disturb you," she said, "but I am worried about Rab. Would you be sa kind as to gang and look for him?"

"Ay, I will gang, to please you," said he, putting on his bonnet and going out into the darkness. It was now late. As he passed the neighbors' houses one after another, he found only darkness and silence. The inmates were wrapped in slumber. Rab was not there. He kept on till he saw the light of Daft Jamie's. As he approached the house he heard loud laughing. He opened the door and beheld with astonishment his brother, who had always been as lithe as a willow, performing sundry feats for the amusement of the company. Rab was so much engaged that he did not notice the entrance of the new-comer.

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"Gude save us!" exclaimed one of the company, "if here isna honest Wullie! I would liefer see the de'il himsel' in this place."

Wullie walked straight to his brother. "It is time all honest folk were at hame," said he.

Robert looked at him a moment, hardly knowing whether to be angry or to yield and feel foolish.

"Can a man no hae a bit o' merriment but ye maun come spierin' aboot after him?" he asked.

"Come hame. Dinna stop here makin' a gowk o' yoursel'," said Wullie in an undertone. "I could hide my face wi' very shame to see your foolish pranks to mak sport for these idle haverals."

Rab went home, but he was much displeased. He did not like the idea of his free moral agency being interfered with. He remained silent and sullen. When the Sabbath came he refused to accompany Wullie to church. Wullie remonstrated, but to no purpose. "Then ye can mind the bairns, and let your wife gang," he added.

"She can gang if she likes," Rab replied.

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The day passed wearily to Robert Murdoch. He felt as one always feels when he is wilfully drifting from the right. To Wullie the day and means of grace had not been without profit. Ever since his brother came to live with him he had been debating with his conscience whether he ought to have family worship. That day he made up his mind to act on the side of duty. When the time for rest drew near, the time when so many of those honest, devout sons of Scotland bowed before the King of kings, Wullie took down the Bible he had so often read in private, and read aloud. Then he knelt in prayer, and one more altar was set up for the worship of God. Short and simple, yet touching, was the prayer of honest Wullie. Especially did he pray that they all might be delivered from the power of the tempter. After he arose from his knees he remarked to Robert,

"Ye dinna mind when our faither kept the fire o' devotion burning on sic an altar as I hae this night set up, but I mind it weel; and I mind, mairiver, that God's fury is to be poured out on the families that call not on his name; so I hae made up my mind that, come what will, I will daily raise my voice in praise to God, to whom I owe every good thing I possess."

Jeannie, who had often in her hours of trouble turned her thoughts towards God, heartily assented to this arrangement. But Rab said to himself, "What is the need o' sic an ado?" He felt that the breath of piety in his home was a constant rebuke to his wilful course, and it vexed him. Truly, "the way of the transgressor is hard."

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But Rab's resentment gradually wore away, and the little household had nearly regained its wonted cheerfulness when, in a few weeks, Rab was again absent.

"I wonder what is keeping Rab," said Jeannie, as they sat down to supper without him. Wullie was as anxious as herself; for when the demon of drink has once entered a household, one never knows at what moment shame, or a worse thing, may come to the door.

As the candle burned low, and the evening was far advanced, Wullie arose and took his bonnet and plaid. "The night is cold, and it is o'er late. I will go and seek Rab. Something has gone wrang, or he would be here."

"He said ye werena to come again," was sobbed out by Jeannie, rather than spoken.

"I canna bide this suspense, and it is my duty to go. We are each our brother's keeper."

It was a still, cold night. The stars shone brightly, and the crusted snow sparkled in the moonlight. Wullie drew his plaid closely about him and strode forth in the direction of Daft Jamie's. He knew by the remark that greeted his ear on the former occasion that his presence was not regarded as desirable, so he slipped in very quietly. There was Mrs. McAllister, who was anxious to shut up for the night, and Rab with his boon companion Donald McPherson. When Wullie entered, Donald was vainly endeavoring to induce Rab to go home.

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"Hands off," said Wullie, coming quickly forward; "I'll tak care o' him mysel'. He has had mair o' your care than is gude for him." Then, turning to the landlady and addressing her, he said, "Ye s'ould be mair careful hoo ye deal oot your foul whiskey."

He raised his brother to his feet, put his bonnet on his head, drew him to the door, and turned his face towards home. He took him by the arm and led him along as fast as possible. Jeannie had sat there anxiously waiting their return. They laid the scarcely conscious man in his bed, and then with aching hearts sought their own pillows, where at length tardy sleep came to relieve exhausted nature.

Robert awoke next morning too late to go to his work in time. His head ached; he felt angry with himself and angry with others. His wife bore his ill-humor with patience, and that annoyed him. Little Jamie noticed the change in his father. "What ails ye, faither, that ye dinna smile to wee Jamie?" he asked.

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"Faither has a sair heid; rin awa and play by yoursel'," said the father.

Jeannie prepared a nice dinner, and she tried to wear a smile, but failed; for in her heart she felt that thick darkness hung over her future.

When honest Wullie returned from his work that evening his face was very grave. Thought had been active all day. Had he been too lenient with his brother when he was young and under his care? Had he failed to impress his mind with Bible truths? What was the cause of his intemperance? and why his aversion to vital piety? These and similar questions had troubled him all day. So while Rob had a "sair heid," Wullie had a sair heart. He took his Bible and read long to himself. Once, some large tears fell on the book. Rab saw them, and his heart was softened. He had never before seen tears in his brother's eyes. He moved uneasily about the room, and spoke pleasantly to his family. He even felt so nearly penitent as to listen patiently to the reading of the Scriptures, and to a lengthy prayer wherein were some allusions to his own shortcomings, for Wullie carried all his troubles to the throne of grace. So he besought the Lord, who is a present help in trouble, to draw near to his household, and to deliver them from the snare of the fowler; he entreated that, if Satan desired to have any of them, the blessed Master might pray for them as he did for Peter of old, and plead their poor prayers before the throne of mercy, and that delivering power might be felt in all their hearts.

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The next day Rab was himself again. He went to his work, and came home at the usual time. He had thought a good deal during the day. He was ashamed of his weakness, and he had resolved to let strong drink alone. He told Wullie that he would never have to go again to Daft Jamie's to bring him home; and he promised Jeannie that he would drink no more. Jeannie rejoiced to hear him say so, although she knew a promise is more easily made than kept.

But Rab kept his resolution. He worked steadily all the next year. He attended church, and seemed anxious to do right. Hope sprang up in the hearts of his wife and brother. Wullie felt sure that God had heard his prayers. And God had heard them. But human strength, at best, is weak; and there was to be one more trial, the hardest and the last.

CHAPTER IV. DEATH IN THE CUP.

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The rolling year again brought the winter. During the coldest weather there was little to be done on the farm, and Wullie and Rab spent many days at home. One very cold evening Rab went out "to look after the coo," as he told his wife. While he was at the cow-shed, Donald McPherson, who was passing that way in hope of seeing his old comrade, approached him softly.

"Come awa wi' me to Daft Jamie's, and get a drop to warm you this cauld night."

"I canna gang, Donald. It isna gude for me nor you to gang there."

"Hoot, man! I'll be bound ye are as dry as a fish oot o' water."

"Weel, dry or no dry, I canna gang. I hae na claes on that would keep me frae the cauld to gang that length, and but a pair pair o' auld shoon to my feet; and if I went to the hoose to get better, Jeannie would say, 'Where are ye gaen?' and Wullie would say, 'What are ye after noo?' Sa ye see yoursel' I canna gang."

"I hae it. Ye jist gang in and say ye are but noo tauld to gang for the doctor for a seek neebor."

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"Na, na. I canna lee, wi' a' my fauts. I would liefer rin fast eneuch to keep mysel' warm."

"Weel, do that," said the tempter; and Rab consented, though rather reluctantly.

He did run fast enough to keep himself warm while going; but alas for the home-coming! He had, of course, drunk more than was good for him. Mrs. McAllister, who feared another visit from honest Wullie, urged Donald to take him home. Donald took him a part of the way and left him. "We hae had a gude auld-fashioned time tagither," said he; "but noo ye maun hasten hame. Rin, for the life o' ye!" But poor Rab did not comprehend his situation; he could not have hurried if he had. The cold soon benumbed him; his feet refused to carry him, and he soon sank down into the snow.

Meantime he had been missed at home, and search had been made for him. It was a long time before it entered into the minds of his family that he might have gone to Daft Jamie's. But with the thought Wullie quickly seized his brother's plaid and his own, and hurried in the direction of the inn. He had gotten about half the distance when he found the object of his search. He succeeded in arousing him, wrapped him in his plaid, and took him home as fast as his ill condition would permit. Rab was allowed to remain near the fire until he was supposed to be warm. Then Wullie offered to "loose his shoon." To his horror he discovered that his feet had been frozen.

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It was a trial to all, but particularly to Rab, that he had to be kept in the house with sore feet. Still, no one at first realized the extent of the injury; and many days had elapsed before a conviction fastened on Rab's mind which found expression in these words:

"I will hae to lose my taes."

"No so bad as that, I hope," said his wife.

"I see nae help for it. Oh, why did I gang oot that unlucky night! I wish I had let the coo gang without her supper; then I wouldna hae seen Donald. I am afeared I will be a cripple a' the rest o' my days; and if I am crippled in sic a way, I will never shaw my heid again."

"But, Rab, ye might hae been frozen to death; think o' that!"

"Ay, I hae thought o' that; and I hae thought o' anither thing, and that is just this: Donald McPherson will hae gray hairs on his heid before I forgie him for that night's wark. I would hae been at hame in my warm bed but for him. I was about my ain business, and had nae intention o' gaen to Daft Jamie's, when he cam along, and naething would do but I maun gang wi' him. But, as God helps me to keep my promise, I will never be found wi' him again."

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"I am glad to hear ye say that," said Jeannie, "and I hope ye will stick to it as lang as he is the same wild, warthless Donald; but if God s'ould change his heart, it would be different, ye ken."

"It is my opeenion that God's grace will never reach Donald."

"Ye maunna say that. Wullie would tell ye no to limit the grace o' God."

"Ay, and Wullie would say there is mercy for me; but I canna feel sure about it."

"And why s'ould there not be mercy for you?"

"Because, Jeannie, I hae been, and am still, a great sinner."

"Weel, Rab, it was but yester morn that I read in the gude Book, 'They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;' and I thought to mysel, here Jesus holds oot hope for the warst o' folk."

"It would seem so, Jeannie, but I ken little aboot sic things."

"And I am nae judge o' thae things either, although I would fain learn about them. We will ask Wullie."

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Accordingly, after Wullie had returned from his work, and had settled in his favorite corner, with Jamie on his knee, Jeannie began to speak upon the subject uppermost in her mind.

"Wullie, doesna the Bible hold forth hope and pardon to the warst o' sinners?"

"Of course it does. Wha says it doesna?"

"Rab says he doesna feel a'thegither sure about it."

Wullie smiled a glad smile, not unmingled with surprise, while he answered, "If you will test the promises, Rab, ye will ken better than to doot them. Only turn to the Lord wi' full purpose o' heart. Tak the promises as your ain, and cling to them, and ye shall save your soul; for the Lord is ever ready to hear all that call upon his name."

"I hae only lately begun to think about sic things. I had some conversation to-day wi' Jeannie that led her to speak to you about it."

"It is the strivings o' the Spirit, Rab. Oh, that ye would 'seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near!' He is near to you noo. He is speaking to your conscience. He has said, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.'" [Pg 34]

"I am sure I would like to have that abundant pardon. But there is are thing I canna mak clear in my ain mind. I canna weel see what maks sic a difference between us. It may be that you are to be saved and I am to be lost. Ye ken the ministers preach that one is sure to go to the gude place, and anither to the bad, according to God's plan."

"I ken, Rab, some say that. But I dinna fash my held aboot election while I can find sic words as these: 'Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?'"

"But, Wullie, might not that be only for the chosen people, the Israelites?"

"Na, Rab, na. 'The Gentiles shall come to Thy light.' And listen to this: 'Ho, *every one* that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.' And again: 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' This is eneuch for me; for I ken weel our blessed Maister wouldna call us to him to send us empty awa." [Pg 35]

"Weel, Wullie, there be folk wha say ane thing, and folk wha say anither thing. Wha kens wha has the right o' it?"

"I will tell ye, Rab; ye just read the Ward o' God for yoursel. I am sure ye are nae fule; and if ye were, ye could understand eneuch to be saved; for the Bible declares that the wayfaring man, though a fule, needna err therein. Noo read for yoursel, as I said, and tak the plain, simple truths o' the Bible. Dinna gang aside frae the general course to pick at what ye canna understand, for in so doing ye may wrest the Scriptures to your ain destruction. Nane by seeking can find out God; neither can they understand all the wards o' him wha is infinite in wisdom."

"But what wad ye think if ye were in the kirk and ye s'ould hear it sounded in your ears that some were left to eternal death?"

"I would no dispute it; but I would whisper softly to my heart sic passages o' the Holy Ward as these: 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whasoever believeth in him s'ould not perish, but have eternal life.' 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whasoever believeth in him s'ould not perish, but have everlasting life.' 'For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.'" [Pg 36]

"That you would say to yoursel; but if a man was in trouble aboot the doctrine o' election, and s'ould ask ye to comfort him, what would ye tell him?"

"I would say, dinna meddle wi' decrees. Never gang back o' the promises. They are strang eneuch to bear us up, and sweet eneuch to comfort us; and I think a' we hae to do is to lay hand o' them as they are held oot to us. And I will tell ye, Rab, what I honestly think: mair folk catch at the question o' election as an excuse for putting off God's claims upon them, than through fear that they are not o' the elect."

CHAPTER V. A YEAR OF GLOOM.

Spring came, but Robert Murdoch was still in his chair. It was then evident that not only his feet had been injured, but that he had also contracted disease. The physician plainly told Wullie that his brother's working days were over. "It is but right to tell you," said he, "that he has consumption; and though its work may not be swift, it will be sure." Honest Wullie staggered under the weight of this sad intelligence. But he took this trouble where he had long since

learned to take all others—to his Father in heaven. He also tried to appear cheerful, though his heart was very heavy.

Rab began to think that his health had been undermined, and he became very despondent. During the day he would sit many hours without speaking; but in the evening he would converse with his brother on indifferent subjects. Wullie soon perceived that he was speaking of that which was least in his thoughts. Therefore, one evening when Jeannie and the children were in another room, he endeavored to lead Rab to talk of that which more nearly concerned his true welfare. [Pg 38]

"Hoo is it," said he, "that ye speak about sic things? I can see right weel that your heart is no in your talk. It would be better to lay aside sic pretences, for ye hae na deceived me frae the vera first. Ye hae a trouble that is pressing sair upon you. Will ye no tell me at ance what it is? Perhaps I might comfort you."

"Wullie," replied Rab, "ye hae had ane look into my heart, and noo I will mak it bare to you. I am thinking I will never be a sound man again. It isna my feet alane, but I hae a sair pain when I cough; and I hae nae mair strength than wee Jamie; and it is nae wonder, for I sweat sae muckle o' nights. But that is not all: the end of it will be death—death to the body at least; and wha kens but it will be death to the soul as weel! It is this that troubles me. I sit and ponder it o'er and o'er, and Jeannie thinks perhaps that I am ill-tempered; but I canna bring mysel to tell her. It would break her heart if I were to dee without hope. Puir lass! I hae never been gude eneuch for her. Many a time I hae pitied her that she wasna better mated."

Wullie was much moved. As soon as he could trust his voice he replied, "Rab, I hae seen all that ye hae tauld me, and mair than ye hae tauld me. Ye are seeking to find favor in the sight o' God; and ye are looking within yoursel to find something to recommend you to him, but ye canna find onything. Ye hae been vexing yoursel wi' a notion a'thegither wrang. Hae ye never understood that ye are to come with a' your guilt upon you, and fall down at the feet o' sovereign Mercy, and ask God to accept you as ye are, since naething but the bluid o' the Son of God has power to cleanse you frae your sins? That is the way you are to come to God. Ye shall read it for yoursel." Handing him the Bible, he continued, "Read frae the eleventh to the twenty-fifth verse o' the fifteenth chapter o' St. Luke, and ye will see if the prodigal son did mair than just come to his faither." [Pg 39]

Rab read the story carefully.

"Ye are right, Wullie. He went wi' a' his fauts, and was thinking to be coonted as a servant; but he wasna, for the servants were called to put the best robe on him, and a ring on his hand, and shoon on his feet."

"Ye hae missed ane strang point, Rab, if ye didna notice that the mere sight o' the sinfu' son, wi' his face turned hameward, gave the faither sic joy that he ran to meet him while he was yet a lang way off, and fell on his neck and kissed him."

"Sae he did; sae he did. Weel, it was sae full I couldna tak it all in at ance." [Pg 40]

Jeannie had returned and sat quietly listening. She had been praying that her husband might be brought to see the promises so clearly as to be led to accept them. Finally she ventured to speak.

"It is plain that a' the young man did, saving his rising and gaen to his faither, was to confess his fauts; and he was met wi' compassion even before he made any confession. So ye see, Rab, God is waiting to forgive if we forsake sin and rise up and go to him. I am sure that I, for ane, need a strang freend to flee to when doots and fears get hold o' me."

"And I feel the need o' sic a freend mair than ye think, Jeannie," said Rab. "Wha will lead me to him?"

"I hae pointed you to the Word o' God, my brither. Ye maun ask to be led by the Holy Spirit. Meantime ye hae my pur prayers that ye may be accepted," said Wullie.

Honest Wullie soon found his hands more than full. Expenses had greatly increased, and were not likely soon to diminish. He now had the entire charge of providing for his brother's family. Besides, there were extra expenses in the way of medicines and occasional visits from the physician. It required all his energy to meet these constantly recurring demands on his resources. The remainder of the small sum he had laid by was spent. Autumn came, and he found that his wages would barely purchase provisions for the winter. There could be no surplus for an emergency. Rab's family now numbered five instead of four, for another little girl had come to be cared for; and the father's illness increased. Wullie felt that he was being sorely tried. He was obliged to apply to his employer to advance him money. [Pg 41]

Farmer Lindsay was accompanied by a strange gentleman when honest Wullie met him and preferred his request. The money was immediately put into his hand.

"How is this," said the stranger when Wullie was gone, "that you advance money in that fashion? If he cannot meet his expenses this year, how will he do it next year with this amount deducted?"

"I admit," said Farmer Lindsay, "that I couldna do it wi' a' my men; but wi' honest Wullie it is a' right. He has ta'en his brither's family into his hoose, and there is seckness amang them. The brither himsel is seck, and his wife has a wee bit bairn, and they hae na onything laid by. I am right sorry for Wullie, for a better man never put his hand to a sickle. I would help him though I [Pg 42]

s'ould never be paid. But there is nae danger o' that. He hasna come to his name without gude reason. I ken him weel. He has a generous nature; and he is aye ready to help ithers when he has the means in his hands."

Here the subject dropped. But the gentleman, who was a cousin of Mrs. Lindsay's, had also a generous nature, and he did not forget honest, struggling Wullie. The next day when he left he put a ten-pound note into Mr. Lindsay's hand, saying, "Give this, with my compliments, to the man that has earned the name of honest Wullie."

Wullie went to town, paid the doctor's bill, bought a few delicacies for the sick, and some necessaries, among which was a pair of thick warm shoes for Jeannie. He paid out nearly all the money he had taken, but still more things were needed. When he reached home he gave the shoes to Jeannie. "I hae brought you some shoon," said he. "Noo your feet will no be weet." Jeannie had not expected them. Her happy surprise gave him no small pleasure. But the pleasure suddenly vanished; for no sooner had he taken his seat by the fire than Jamie climbed on his knee and asked,

"Uncle Wullie, did you bring me too ony new shoon?"

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"Nae, my wee man, I couldna spare the siller."

"Will ye bring me some when ye gang again? My shoon are fu' o' holes."

"I canna promise, puir laddie," said he, stroking the child's head as he spoke.

Jamie hid his face on his uncle's neck and cried from disappointment.

Wullie felt very sorry for his little nephew. "Dinna greet, laddie, dinna greet," said he. "Ye will hae me keepin' you company if ye dinna stop." In reality he felt perplexed as well as sorry; for he could not help seeing that to keep comfortable would require his utmost efforts.

The signs of perplexity had not left his countenance, when Farmer Lindsay entered. Mr. Lindsay seemed the bearer of good tidings, so happy was his face. He wished them all a good evening, and then inquired particularly after Rab.

"I am nae better," said Rab.

"And hoo are a' the bairns, Mistress Murdoch?"

"They are a' vera weel, I thank ye."

"And hoo hae ye made oot wi' your marketing in the town, Wullie?"

"I found things o'er dear; and I hae na got a' I s'ould hae fetched, for this wee man has but noo been greetin' for new shoon. I brought his mither a pair, and he lookit doun at his ain feet; then he climbed to my knee and spiered at me about shoon for himsel. It is nae wonder, as ye see," said Wullie, holding up both the small feet in his capacious hand and displaying the condition of the shoes.

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Farmer Lindsay smiled peculiarly. "Come here, my wee man," said he. "So ye hae been greetin' about new shoon, hae ye? Weel, your uncle will bring them the next time he gaes to town."

"I dinna ken hoo that will be," interposed Wullie.

"Weel, ye will hae the means to get them, at ony rate," replied Mr. Lindsay; "for the man ye saw wi' me yesterday, when he learned more about you, gied me a ten-pound note, saying 'Gie that, wi' my compliments, to the man that has earned the name o' honest Wullie.'"

Wullie was dumb with amazement. But collecting his thoughts he said, "I hae nae suitable words to express my thanks; but if I ever see the gentleman I will do my best to thank him, for I am right thankfu'. But, Mr. Lindsay, I hae seen the time when I wouldna hae taen sic a gift. But God has shawn me that it is pride, and not wisdom, that refuses the help that gude men offer to their struggling fellow-men. Especially would it be wrang for me, sin' I hae the comfort o' ithers to consider."

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"That is my ain opeenion, Wullie; and I thought ye would hae the sense to see it in that light. I hae nae sympathy, nor patience either, wi' puir folk that haud their heids sae high, and willna accept help when it is offered to them, and then sink into want or disgrace through their ain fulish pride."

"Ye are right, Mr. Lindsay. If God puts it into the hearts o' gude men to help those wha are in need, and they willna receive that help, they stand in the way o' Providence, sin' they shut up channels through which the Lord would send blessings to them. Every ane can understand that it is mair gratifying to give than to acknowledge ane's needs so far as to accept gifts; but pride maun hae a fa'."

"Just so, Wullie. Now, if ye s'ould find yoursel again in want o' means, come to me. I wish ye a' a good-night."

"Hae ye ever heard o' sic a thing!" exclaimed Wullie when the door had closed behind Farmer Lindsay. "Yesterday I was that discouraged that I hardly kenned what to do nor which way to turn. But I clung to the promise o' God, and I said to mysel, 'The siller and the gowd are his;' but I couldna see in what way he would send it to me in my sair need. My heart wouldna quite trust

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yet. I thought o' the wee helpless bairns, and I said again to mysel, 'He hears the young ravens when they cry, and he will hear the prayer o' his unworthy servant for those His ain providence has put into his care.' Then I gaed about my wark as light o' heart as the birds o' the air. But my faith was o'er weak, for when wee Jamie was disappointed I had a'maist gien o'er again to fear."

"Weel, Wullie, if ye lack faith, what would ye think o' me?" asked Rab.

"Ah, Rab, ye hae na proved what comfort ane gets in just takin' God at his ward. I dinna see hoo folk can endure life without the Heavenly Father's smile. It is true they hae the bonny things in nature; but they are far bonnier when ane can not only see their beauty, but can trace in them the gudeness and wisdom o' the Creator, and can feel that he has this all-wise Creator for his freend. Mony a time when I am weary wi' my wark, I see a bonny wee flower, and the sight o' it gladdens me. I hear the blithe sang o' a bit bird, and that cheers me. I see the drooping plant revive, and I say to mysel, 'Though I fa', I shall rise again.' I tell ye, there is naething like having the Bible hidden in your heart when your een are lookin' oot on the face o' nature. The ane makes you think o' the ither. They blend weel thegither, and strengthen ane's faith, for it isna hard to see that He that created the ane inspired the ither."

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"Hoo differently you and I hae aye lookit on life, Wullie. Did ye ever think o' it?"

"Ay, I hae thought o' it mony times. Ye hae been fond o' company, while I hae been fond o' quiet. I hae made a companion o' my Bible; and I gie it as my verdict that it is not only a safe, but a profitable ane."

Wullie's heart was full of glad thankfulness. He rose and stirred the fire, and added fuel. There should be no lack of anything now. "Jamie, ye s'all hae new shoon, and wee Belle s'all hae new shoon; and Rab, ye s'all no want for medicines. Jeannie, ye will see till 't that there is plenty o' parritch made, for if the meal gies oot ye can hae mair. Weel, weel, I canna forget it. Is it no wonderfu' that the gentleman s'ould hae left the money for me! I hae nae doot he is a servant of the Lord, sin' he considers the puir. Oh, how I wish that ilka ane would set his heart on serving the Most High!"

CHAPTER VI. A CLEAR SUNSET.

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Wullie now felt a great relief with regard to ways and means. Ten pounds seemed quite a sum to those frugal cottagers. But as Rab's illness increased Wullie became very anxious about his brother's future welfare, and earnestly desired that he should experience a good hope through the Saviour of sinners. He missed no opportunity to set before him the love of Christ, and his willingness to save all who come to him with a humble and contrite heart. He proposed to bring the parish minister. But Rab said, "Not yet. I like best to talk wi' yoursel, Wullie. I would be ashamed to talk to onybody about my past life."

"Are ye sorry for it as weel as ashamed o' it."

"Ay, I am baith ashamed and sorry."

"There is a godly sorrow that warketh repentance. Hae ye that sorrow?"

"I dinna ken right weel what that s'ould be."

"I will tell you what it is as near as I can come to it. If the remembrance o' sin is painfu' to us because it is hateful in the sight o' God; if our misspent, unprofitable lives grieve us because they hae grieved our Saviour, to whom we owe obedient, faithful service; if we wish to forsake sin, because it is sin, and not from fear o' punishment alane, then I think it is the sorrow that warketh repentance."

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"I think I feel something like that. I dinna ken hoo it would be if I were oot again wi' my auld comrades; but noo as I lie here I am seck o' sin, seck o' the things I ance loved. I canna bear to think o' my past life. In the night season I often put oot my hand in the vain attempt to push it far frae me, but it willna gang oot o' my memory. Then I think o' Him wha deed to save us frae oor sins, and I remember that I hae never turned towards him, but awa frae him, and I feel that my condemnation would be just. But at ither times I feel that I will, I must, lay hold o' some promise; that I will lay me doun just outside the door o' mercy, and wait to see if the Maister willna lift the latch and bid me come in."

"Brither, it is yoursel maun lift the latch to the door o' your heart, and bid the Maister come in and possess it. Beyond a doot the Saviour is noo knocking to be admitted. Do ye no remember that passage o' Scripture that reads, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me'? Noo, my brither, in faith bid the Maister enter your heart, and all will be weel. Only believe, Rab. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'"

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"Wullie, I am gaen to believe noo." Then closing his eyes, he said aloud, "Lord, I will believe thee. I do believe thee; and if I do not believe aright, wilt thou teach me how to believe?"

Wullie went to the bedside, and, kneeling down, he poured out his soul in prayer that God would bless them all, and bless them then. When he arose from his knees Jeannie was weeping softly, but Rab had a glad light in his eyes. "Wullie," he said, "the darkness is o'erpast, and light is breaking through. Oh, the wondrous condescension o' the Saviour! Jeannie, my puir wife, ye maun find Jesus and hae him for your dearest freend."

"I hae found him, Rab. Ane can greet wi' joy as weel as sorrow."

"That is true," said Wullie, as he wiped away the great joy-born tears from his own cheeks. It was a sight for angels—and angels do know of such scenes, for "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

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"I think I would hae been comforted sooner," said Rab, "if I could hae brought mysel to forgive Donald the wrang he has done me. But I couldna do it, although I aye remembered what oor Saviour himsel said, 'If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.' It was only this morning that I forgave him, and noo I am rejoicing in forgiveness mysel. I would like to tell Donald that I forgave him, for perhaps after I am awa he may feel troubled about it."

Donald McPherson had always felt very guilty concerning his own part in Rab's illness. He never came near the cottage, and he took care to avoid honest Wullie. But now that Rab had expressed a desire to tell Donald that he had forgiven him, Wullie went to Donald's cottage and told him that Rab would like to see him. Donald looked embarrassed and troubled.

"He wants to upbraid me," said he, "but God knows my ain conscience has upbraided me eneuch for that night's wark."

"Na, naething o' the kind. I could tell you what it is mysel, but he would rather tell it."

"I will come and see him. I hear he isna lang for this warld."

"He willna be here lang," replied Wullie.

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"God hae mercy on us a'," said Donald, with emotion.

That night there was a timid knock at honest Wullie's door. "Come in," said Wullie in a loud tone. The latch was lifted, and in walked Donald McPherson. Jeannie set a chair for him, and Wullie spoke pleasantly to him. But Donald was ill at ease. He seemed looking for some one he did not see. A voice from the bed said, "Good evening to ye, Donald." Donald approached the bed, and Rab extended his hand.

"I am o'er sorry to see you here," said Donald, grasping the proffered hand. A shiver ran through him as he saw and felt how emaciated it was.



"I am o'er sorry to see you here," said Donald.

"My hand is o'er thin," said Rab, noticing his emotion.

"Ay is it, and it is a' my ain faut."

"Not a'thegither, Donald, for I s'ould hae been proof against temptation."

"Ye would hae dune weel eneuch if ye had been left alane."

"That is true as to the night I got my seckness; but I might hae fallen some ither time, for I hadna the grace o' God to keep me in the right way. Noo I willna fall into that sin ony mair—I canna. And ye maunna think ye are no forgien your part in that night's wark, for I hae forgien ye, and that is what I wanted to tell you. God has forgien me, but he wouldna do it until I had forgien you. Noo I hope ye will ken what it is to hae God's forgiveness as weel as mine. Ye hae, as ye say, led me in the wrang way; let me noo seek to lead you in the right way. It is a fearsome thing to live without God for a freend. I hae found that oot the last year o' my life. To feel, as I hae felt, that life is fast passing awa, and to see nae hope in the darkness beyond, is dreadful, dreadful, Donald. Your life will hae an end too, Donald, though it mayna be for many years. Then ye will stand alane before your Maker. Do ye no ken that there are robes provided, so that each wha will may wrap himsel around wi' them as he wraps his plaid about him? only thae robes cover us entirely. They are robes o' the Saviour's righteousness. Wi' sic a robe about us we may stand before the Judge o' all the earth and not fear condemnation. I dinna ken as I mak it plain to you, for I am but a beginner in the scule o' Christ; but I am in his scule, Donald; yes, I am; praised be the gude Lord for that! And what I canna learn here I can learn in the warld above."

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"I hope I shall meet you there," said Donald, wiping the tears away with his hand.

"Dinna put off repentance till ye come to your death-bed, Donald. Gie your heart to God noo; and then, whether ye are called sooner or later, ye are aye ready."

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Donald was much affected. He remained an hour or more talking with Wullie, and then left, promising to come again, and offering his assistance if it should be needed.

During Rab's illness Jeannie was very quiet in her manner, but her heart was heavy and sad. Slowly but surely proof was added to proof that her husband was soon to die. With many fears and anxieties she had looked forward to the long, weary time that must elapse between the sad event about to befall her and the time when her children would be old enough to seek their own livelihood. But since she had obtained a hope of eternal life she had learned to regard the future with less anxiety, and to cast her cares on One stronger than herself. Still the sadness remained.

She could not forget that disease was fast wasting all that was mortal of Robert Murdoch. That which is spiritual within us may assent to God's providences, and we think it to be in the ascendancy, and so it is; but sometimes, when the chill and gloom of a starless night settle down upon our spirits, our natural desires assert themselves, and we clutch again our passing friends and comforts. Poor Jeannie! More thorns than roses seemed to grow along her pathway. And now the saddest trial of all was before her. But she had promised in her heart that, if God would save her husband eternally, she would not murmur at the dispensation that was to separate him from her in this life. For this reason she strove to control her feelings; and the quivering of the face was often stayed before the tear-drop started.

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Once, when her husband noticed these outward signs of inward grief, he called her to him. She drew her chair to the bedside, and laid her head on the pillow. "My puir wife," said he, while he pressed her pale cheek with his thin hand, "I hae never been as gude to you as I s'ould hae been, and noo I am gaen frae you. I ask your forgiveness. I leave you in the hands o' God, and under him to the care o' Wullie. I couldna leave you in better hands. And, Jeannie, if Wullie would ever wish to mak you his wife, hear till him."

She raised her eyes with a look of surprise and reproof.

He understood her, and continued, "Weel, never mind noo what I hae said. Some time ye may remember it without sae muckle pain, and be glad ye kenned my mind about it."

The winter passed slowly away. Rab's death was expected from week to week. The neighbors were untiring in their kindness and sympathy. Farmer Lindsay called often, and many a kind word he spoke to the afflicted family. Mrs. Lindsay sent many a dainty to tempt the sick man's appetite. The pastor, too, called, and was satisfied with the dying man's profession of faith.

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"I am so thankful," said Rab, "that I had time gien me for repentance. If I had been cut off suddenly I s'ould hae gane to eternal death."

Donald McPherson fulfilled his promise and came often. "I hae seen eneuch o' the evils o' strang drink," he said to Rab, "and I want ye to carry wi' you to heaven my promise that, wi' God's help, I will never taste anither drap."

When the milder days of spring succeeded the rigors of winter, Robert Murdoch's lamp of life flickered and went out. He met death with a calm resignation and a happy trust.

Mrs. Murdoch yielded to sorrow after her husband was dead. No one interfered with her grief until Wullie thought she had wept "o'er lang." "Compose yoursel, sister Jeannie," he said, speaking in a persuasive manner. "I ken it is hard to bear; but neither yoursel nor the bairns will want for a freend while it is in the power o' Wullie Murdoch to help you. He wha has gaen frae us can never return to us, but we can gang to him in the Lord's ain gude time."

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A simple funeral service was held at the church, and the body was committed to the earth whence it came.

CHAPTER VII.

DONALD MACPHERSON.

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No one, not even the widow, wept more at the grave than did Donald McPherson. The once light-hearted, mischief-loving, whiskey-drinking Donald was overcome with sorrow and contrition. He took Rab's death greatly to heart, and, standing by that open grave, he firmly resolved that from that hour he would change his manner of life; that he would fear and serve God, and never again place a stumbling-block in the way of his fellow-creatures. After the funeral he went to honest Wullie's cottage, "to see if there was onything to be dune," as he said.

Wullie thanked him for his kindness, adding, "The little that is to be dune I can do mysel. I would liefer be busy than not. But I am glad to see you, for a' that." Then, laying his hand on McPherson's shoulder, he said, "Ye will no forget the lesson o' this day, Donald!"

"I trust I never shall."

The widow had bowed to Donald as he entered, and then left the room. She went to attend the children; but she was glad of the excuse, for memory was too busy with the past to render the presence of Rab's old comrade desirable on that sad day.

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Donald went slowly from the home of mourning to his own cottage. He hung his bonnet on a peg, then went and sat down beside his wife. She was holding a troublesome child and trying to sew at the same time. "Here, gie me the bairn," said he. He took the child in his strong arms and dandled him, much to the satisfaction of wee Donald. Then with much seriousness he addressed his wife.

"Katy, I dinna think I will gie you as muckle trouble as I hae dune. I maun gie up auld habits. They wunna do ony langer. I hae just seen Mistress Murdoch, and I hae been thinkin' what if it had been yoursel, Katy, that this day was clad in garments o' dool instead o' her, where would the soul o' Donald McPherson hae been noo!"

The person addressed was a tall, straight, well-formed woman, whose face showed both thoughtfulness and firmness. She only replied, "It is weel to think."

"I hae thought, and I hae felt as weel. Noo dinna think there is nae gude in me, wifie, but trust me ance mair. I am no gaen to drink any mair whiskey. I hae promised him that they this day laid law that I wouldna, and that I would gang to kirk. Noo I will tell ye my plans. I will gang to Daft Jamie's but ance mair, and that will be to pay fourpence ha'penny, for that is a' I owe them, I am blithe to say; and then never a penny mair will I gie for grog; but I will save a' that I can earn, and we will soon hae decent claes, and gang to the kirk like Christian folk."

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"That sounds gude, and I hope ye will do as ye say; and ye may do it if ye look to the Strang for help."

After supper Donald put on his bonnet and went to Daft Jamie's. Mrs. McAllister smiled very blandly as he entered.

"Gude evenin' to ye, Donald. Ye hae keepit yoursel a great stranger o' late. What will ye be wantin'?"

"I am wantin' naething but to pay a bit debt. A man maun pay his debts, I suppose, though what he has bought has dune him no gude."

"Hoot, man! Hae ye taen to preachin'? Ye ken as weel as ony ane that it is gude whiskey we keep; and a drap o' gude whiskey hurts naebody."

"Na, Mistress McAllister, a drap wunna hurt ony ane; but wha stops at a drap, tell me?"

"Weel, Donald, ye ken it is a decent hoose we keep, and we dinna want ony drunken folk around us."

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"Ay, I ken it; and that is ane reason why puir Rab went oot i' the cauld the night he got his death."

"Weel, weel, hae your ain opeenion about it, but dinna stand quarrellin' wi' me. Sin' ye dinna want onything ye may as weel be gaen."

"I will, Mistress McAllister, and there'll be mony a weet day afore I again cross your doorstane. Gude evenin' to ye."

Donald was soon at home again, much to the joy of his wife; for she thought if he could go to Daft Jamie's and return without the scent of liquor about him, there was indeed some room for hope.

CHAPTER VIII. IMPROVEMENTS.

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Widow Murdoch now gave more time and attention to her children. The youngest had not yet been named, but had always been called "the wee lass." Now that more notice was taken of her, she began to smile and play.

"It is time this bairn had a name, Wullie," said Jeannie one evening when the baby was lying on her lap. "What would ye think o' callin' her Annie? It would be for Rab's mither, and it is a bonny name forbye."

"That I would like right weel."

So this important matter was happily decided, and Annie was the little one's name.

Spring brought warm, bright days, Jamie and Belle played at the cottage door, their innocent prattle often beguiling their mother's sad hours.

Honest Wullie was not long in paying by his labor the debt which he had contracted, and he felt glad that his accounts were again even. Farmer Lindsay let him have a small piece of ground near the cottage to be made into a garden. This was to be the joint care of Wullie, Jeannie, and Jamie, for "Jamie is auld eneuch noo to pu' the weeds frae the beds," said his uncle.

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But with all the work to do that one could easily accomplish, widow Murdoch often felt lonely. She had been three years in honest Wullie's cottage, but she had made very few acquaintances. Mrs. Lindsay never came into the cottage except in time of sickness. Mrs. McPherson, like herself, had hitherto been kept closely at home by care and poverty, and there had been no intercourse between the two women. At this time, however, they were brought together.

Donald was the first to propose a visit. One pleasant evening in the early summer, when Katy had just finished the first dress that Donald had ever bought for her, he surprised her by saying, "Mak yoursel ready, Katy, and gang wi' me to honest Wullie's; then ye will become acquent wi' widow Murdoch. She is but poor, like yoursel, and I am thinking she maun be lanely. At ony rate, it is but neeborly to call and see her."

Mrs. McPherson readily assented. She put a clean cap and dress on the baby, and arrayed herself in her new gown. Donald combed his hair until it was smooth, and put on his best coat.

"Katy, ye look as fine the night as a leddy," said Donald as they were ready to start; "but ye aye did keep yoursel tidy, though ye hae na had muckle to do wi'. There is muckle difference in folk. Some people's claes fit them, while other people's claes seem to hing on them. Mrs. Murdoch is like yoursel. She has a way o' makin' the maist o' ilka thing. It wasna muckle she brought to Wullie's cottage, but ye s'ould hae seen the difference she made in the looks o' it." [Pg 64]

The two soon found themselves at honest Wullie's cottage, where they met a kind reception and spent a pleasant evening. The conversation often turned on moral and religious topics, as would necessarily be the case where honest Wullie took part.

Donald was full of new hopes and courage.

"Wullie, ye s'ould come and see hoo nicely we are getting along," said he. "We hae eneuch to eat and drink, and some new claes for Sunday forbye. Katy, there, thinks I am quite a man noo."

"I always thought ye would do weel eneuch if ye would let whiskey alane."

"I will let it alane frae this oot, or I dinna ken mysel."

"Donald, ye dinna depend a'thegither on yoursel, I hope," said Wullie.

"Nae, Wullie, I ken better than that; but I hae changed my purpose, and I hae asked help o' the Strang Ane. That is what Katy said I must do. Puir lass! I am sure she has kenned the comfort o' gaen to him mony times when sairly tried wi' me." [Pg 65]

"It is gude to go to the Lord in times o' trial," said Wullie; "and it is gude to go to him wi' thankful hearts when the trials are o'erpast. I hae nae doot, Mistress McPherson, but that ye find it baith pleasant and profitable to come wi' your heart full o' gratitude and praise to him wha has heard your prayers."

"Ay, I like weel to acknowledge his gudeness to me in saving Donald frae the evil that threatened him; but it grieves me noo to think I had sae nearly distrusted Him because He didna answer my prayers at ance. Mony a time did I a'maist feel that there is nae gude in prayer, and that God wouldna hear a puir body like me. But I dinna think he has set it doun against me, sin' he has answered my prayer. Besides, he kens I was but a weak woman, and sairly tried forbye."

Tears filled Jeannie's eyes. Katy's experience had been her own. And although it recalled her trials, to which she would not allude, because we instinctively cover the faults and follies of our dear dead, she felt, nevertheless, drawn towards Katy. Both had had trials, but not more than they were able to bear; and the discipline of an all-wise Father had chastened and strengthened them both. [Pg 66]

"We a' hae cause for thankfulness ilka day o' oor lives," Wullie hastened to say, as he perceived Jeannie's emotion. "Let nane o' us be remiss in the duty o' prayer and thanksgiving."

This visit proved the precursor of many others, and the two women became good friends. Wullie strengthened Jeannie's good impressions of Katy McPherson.

"She was aye a canny lass," he said. "Folk wondered that she wedded wi' sic a giddy chiel as Donald was; but if he sticks to his ward noo, he will mak a gude living for her, for he can wark weel when he sets himsel to it, and naebody can ootstrip him in the harvest-field."

Donald soon learned to go to honest Wullie for advice, and he was as anxious to meet him as he had been to avoid him. He seemed changed in many ways. His new hope and trust had lifted him above that frivolity which had always been so prominent a characteristic of his. He found the influence of his wife much more elevating than that of his boon companions, and he said to her, "Ye s'all see what a man can be made oot o' me, frolickin' as I hae been. I would na wonder if folk s'ould yet ca' me 'douce Donald.'"

Wullie's garden proved a success, and the fresh, tender vegetables added much to the frugal fare. Then, as Donald had said, Jeannie made the most of everything. Her skill in cooking also added to their comfort. Her neat, orderly ways were everywhere apparent. It was a pretty sight to see the three rosy children, with clean hands and faces, clean pinafores, and carefully combed hair, gathered at the family board, Annie seated on her mother's knee, the others on their stools. They were trained to be obedient and respectful, to keep the Sabbath with due strictness, and, above all, to fear and honor God. Thus not only shadows, but sunshine, too, rested on the little moorland cottage. Peace and harmony reigned in the household, and signs of thrift were also apparent. Wullie could now sometimes allow himself the pleasure of bringing little gifts to the children, and their childish delight hardly surpassed his own. [Pg 67]

Jeannie did not forget to thank God for the blessings she enjoyed. And although the recollection of the early death of her husband often brought sorrow to her heart and a shade of sadness to her countenance, the sorrow was softened by the cherished hope of his eternal happiness and a future reunion. Thus passed two years more, but these were years of comparative comfort.

CHAPTER IX. NEW TIES.

One evening, when the McPhersons were spending an hour or two at the cottage, Donald took it into his head to joke Wullie about matrimony.

"Hoot, man, what ails ye, to talk after that fashion?" exclaimed Wullie.

"And what for no? Is it no a gude fashion? I daur ye to say it is no a gude fashion!"

Wullie did not reply, but a smile was on his face.

"Honestly, noo," continued Donald; "Katy and I hae talked it over mair than ance, and we baith think it is the best thing that could be dune. Ye ken there is naething against it, for Rab was no your vera ain brither."

Katy smiled, but Jeannie knitted busily, showing neither pleasure nor displeasure.

Donald's suggestion seemed to have struck Wullie favorably, for after the visitors had gone he ventured to renew the subject.

"Jeannie, what think ye about oor neebor's talk?"

"His talk about what? He says sae muckle, wha can mind it a'?" she said with that persistent dullness of comprehension that is often assumed by her sex. [Pg 69]

Wullie, seeing he would have no help in the matter, came to the point at once, "His talk about wedlock, to be sure."

"It is but ane o' his daft notions," she replied, but in a tone less severe than the words.

"It isna sae daft a notion, perhaps," he said, following up his advantage. "It is true I hae neither riches, wit, nor beauty. I hae naught but a hamely living to offer ye, and that ye s'all hae at ony rate if I can win it. I will always do my best to provide for Rab's family, but it might be mair proper to hae the family a' in ane. What do ye say till it?"

"I will say naething against the wish o' him wha is gaen awa. He said, 'If Wullie would ever wish to mak ye his wife, hear till him.'"

"Noo, then," said Wullie, "I will tak the first kiss I hae had o' a woman sin' my mither died. Hoo soon s'all it be?"

"As it suits yoursel. Ye ken my best earthly affections lie in the grave wi' your brither; but if ye can tak respect and esteem instead o' affection, I willna oppose your wishes."

"Weel, I will accept what ye hae to gie me, and perhaps the affection will come after a while." [Pg 70]

"Ye are mair than warthy o' it, Wullie; sae I hope it will come. But sin' I didna hae it, I wouldna deceive ye."

"Ye hae been honest aboot it at ony rate, sae it wanna fret me."

A few days later Wullie returned from town with a nice dress-pattern for Jeannie, some tartans for the little girls, cloth to be made up for Jamie, and a new suit for himself. After a few weeks there were gathered in the best room of the cottage Farmer Lindsay and his wife, Donald and Katy McPherson, the children, and the parish minister. Before him stood honest Wullie and the widow, who was then to become Mrs. William Murdoch. After the ceremony and the congratulations were over came a supper such as had never before been seen in the cottage. After this was finished Farmer Lindsay took his seat by the window, and often looked out into the twilight. Presently he saw, as he expected, his herd-boy leading a fine young cow.

"I suppose ye hae room in your byre for anither coo?" he asked, addressing Wullie.

"Ay, I hae room eneuch, if that was a' that stood in the way o' twa being there."

"Weel, then, ye will hae twa, for here comes a lad wi' the heifer we ca' Spot. Did ye think I would forget my auld and tried servant at sic a time as this?" [Pg 71]

"Weel, weel, weel! This is wholly unexpectit! Mony thanks to you, Maister Lindsay."

Donald McPherson rejoiced in the good fortune of his neighbor, but he felt somewhat crestfallen that he had brought nothing to give, and he expressed his regret to his host. But Wullie relieved him by saying, with a smile,

"We canna a' gie presents, Donald, but we can a' gie gude wishes, and I am sure ye gie me them, neebor."

The evening passed in pleasant talk, and when these neighbors separated it was with a kindly feeling towards each other that is often wanting in the higher circles of life.

Honest Wullie continued to prosper, though in a small way. The years glided by, bringing nothing but pleasing changes, the most pleasing of which was the birth of a son. Jamie had long since left his uncle's knee to younger claimants. He was a strong, healthy lad, possessing his father's wit and sprightliness, and also uncommon beauty. His mother's eyes often rested on him with maternal fondness, if not with pride. He found plenty to do in collecting fuel, helping with the garden, and doing the work in and around the cow-shed. He attended the little parish school a few months in the year. He was fond of books, too, although there was nothing in his [Pg 72]

surroundings to foster a love of study. True, Farmer Lindsay once patted him on the head, and said, "If ye could stand a fair chance, Jamie, ye would mak a man no to be ashamed o'"; and the schoolmaster sometimes gave him the praise he merited. But the days came and went, bringing him nearer to the time when he must be put to steady employment to help to defray the expenses of the family, with which time we will open the next chapter.

CHAPTER X. JAMIE.

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Jamie had now entered upon his thirteenth year, and was to commence life's labor as a shepherd-lad. Farmer Lindsay, knowing that it would pain the family to have the lad leave home, found a place for Jamie by giving other employment to his former shepherd-boy. So Belle and Annie went to school without Jamie, and he took his way to the field. He was faithful, as might have been expected, for honest Wullie had not failed in his duty to his brother's son. He had striven, both by example and precept, to inculcate in him right principles, knowing that right doing would be their legitimate outgrowth.

The summer passed pleasantly enough with Jamie, for he was a favorite with all on the farm. Even Mrs. Lindsay often called after him to add a slice of cheese to the frugal lunch he carried with him. But summer hurried by, and dull, short, foggy days succeeded the long, bright, sunny ones. One evening Jamie was belated in collecting the flock. The darkness was coming on apace, and he was hurrying along where the path, slippery with the dampness, led over some steep, rough rocks; he missed his footing and fell.

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Night, black night, settled down upon the earth, but no Jamie came to the cottage. Honest Wullie put on his bonnet and retraced his steps to Farmer Lindsay's. Jamie was not there. Then the other farm-hands, headed by Wullie and Mr. Lindsay himself, set out in search of the shepherd-boy and the flock. They lighted up the darkness with torches, and looked to the right hand and to the left. They found the flock huddled together not far from the steep pass, which all had thought of, but none had dared mention. Vainly did they peer down the steep mountainside. Vainly did honest Wullie shout, "Jamie! Jamie, bairn!" No answer was returned. If the boy had fallen there, he had fainted, or was too badly hurt to answer. Wullie signified his intention of crossing the mountain and coming around at the base; but the air became so thick with mist that the torches would not burn, and loath as the anxious searchers were to turn back, they were forced to do so, for the path was too dangerous to be attempted in the darkness. Weary and heavy-hearted returned Wullie to the sorrowing mother. The night was spent by these sad cottagers in prayer, and with the first streaks of morning light Wullie again started out to renew his search.

Day broke as beautifully as if the preceding evening had not been dull and dismal. Before Wullie reached the pass the sun rose, scattering the mist, and bathing in mellow light moor and crag, mountain and glen. But the anxious father hastened on, not heeding the rich glory of the autumnal morning.

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Others, too, in that vicinity had early bestirred themselves, not in search of the missing boy, but in pursuit of game. Laird Erskine, with his kinsman John Cameron from Edinburgh, were first at the foot of the mountain. What was their surprise to see a boy lying as if dead among the rocks! They hastened to him. He was not dead; he was breathing. Erskine lifted him from his rough bed and laid him on the smooth grass. Cameron looked at him with wondering eyes.

"Saw ye ever a finer lad! Who is he, Erskine?"

"That is what I would like to ken mysel," said the other.

They spoke to him; they tried to rouse him; but he only moaned, and murmured, "O mother, I dinna want to tend the sheep ony mair. I want to gang back to the scule."

Before they had succeeded in rousing him they saw the stalwart form of honest Wullie striding towards them. So anxious was he that he forgot the usual courtesies, and did not raise his bonnet, but called out, "Is he dead?"

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"No, he is not dead," was the cheering answer.

"Praise the gude Lord!" came reverently from the lips of honest Wullie.

On reaching the boy he lifted his head in his arms, shook him gently, and called his name: "Jamie! rouse up, Jamie!" After much shaking and calling, Jamie opened his eyes and looked wonderingly around, as if trying to identify himself and his surroundings. Then gradually recovering consciousness, he recognized his father.

"Faither, I missed my footing and cam to the bottom. I am no sure but I fainted, for I canna remember what happened after I fell. When I was able to think I felt a pain in my back, and I was so sair that I could hardly stir. I didna dare to move in the darkness for fear I should get another fall, so I just prayed a' by mysel here, and I kenned weel ye would pray for me at hame, so I wasna afeard. But where is the flock?"

"The flock is a' right. Dinna fash your heid about the flock," said Wullie, brushing away a tear.

Jamie tried to rise, but the first movement gave him pain. Wullie lifted him tenderly. "I feel," he said, "that I could tak ye in my arms and rin wi' you to your mither, I am that glad to find you alive. It is naught but the care o' God, Jamie, that saved ye frae being dashed to pieces among the stanes."

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Erskine and his friend lingered till Jamie was on his feet again. "I am thankful it is no worse," said Cameron, as he turned to go, "and I will not forget you, my lad."

Jamie, in addition to his bruises, took a severe cold from spending the night on the cold, damp ground. He kept his bed a few days, and two weeks passed before he was able to be about. During this time the sheep had been brought in for the winter, and there was no more herding to be done that year.

While Jamie was confined to the house by his injuries Cameron called at the cottage. He was greatly pleased with Jamie. He thought the boy had capabilities that were worth cultivating. He sounded the parents concerning their plans for their son's future, and ascertained that they indulged no higher hope than that he should be a trusty farm-hand like honest Wullie. But the boy's eyes followed every movement of the stranger with a look of expectancy, and when Cameron asked him if he would like to become a man of learning, Jamie quickly answered in the affirmative.

"He can gang to scule this winter," said Wullie.

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"That will do for the winter," replied Cameron, "and when I come next year I will see what arrangement can be made to put him into a better school."

After the gentleman's departure the parents were very grave and thoughtful. They did not know whether the interest the stranger took in Jamie portended good or ill. "If he is no a godly man," said Wullie, "I wouldna like to hae him meddle wi' the bairn; but if he is a gude man, and will tak care to keep him frae evil communications, I would be slow to mak objections or to pit onything i' the way o' the man's wishes."

But Jamie was full of bright anticipations. He talked so often about what Mr. Cameron said, and asked so many questions concerning the probable meaning of his words, that the mother was weary of hearing it. "Jamie, Jamie, will ye never hae dune talking about that man?" she asked. "Ye will drive me beside mysel. I wouldna be surprised if he had forgotten all about you."

Jamie did stop talking, but he was sad and dispirited for many days.

"What is wrang wi' ye, Jamie? Ye needna think it is a sin to smile," his mother said, noticing his listlessness.

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"I dinna think I will ever smile ony mair, sin' ye think Mr. Cameron has forgotten me," said Jamie, turning away his face to hide a starting tear.

"Ye are takin' it harder than I meant. I am no sure but he will be looking after you o'er soon, and I canna bear to think o' it. He will be wanting to tak you frae hame; that is the warst o' it."

"Weel, mither, every laddie canna bide at hame. I have read in books about folk that hae been mair useful for their knowledge, and I think knowledge maun be a grand thing to hae. I read in the sculemaster's books about men that could call the stars by name, and measure the heights o' the mountains; and I read in a history about mony great men, and I like weel to think that Jamie Murdoch may some day be a great man too."

"It would be better to wish to be a gude man."

"But, mither, can a man no be baith gude and great?"

Early in the spring Farmer Lindsay brought a letter for honest Wullie. It bore the Edinburgh postmark. As a letter was a rare thing at that time and place, Mr. Lindsay waited till Wullie spelled it out. It contained a proposition from Mr. Cameron. He would pay Wullie as much as Jamie could earn, and his tuition besides, if the parish minister would undertake to instruct him preparatory to his entering a high school at Edinburgh. This plan pleased them all exceedingly well, and the more so because Mr. Cameron said they must not hesitate to accept his offer, as he was a friend to education, and had means to spare. He further said that he had taken a great fancy to their son, and would be disappointed if they were unwilling to let him receive a liberal education.

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The minister readily undertook the charge, and was glad of the opportunity to eke out his small salary. Jamie did not disappoint his friends. He proved an apt pupil. His parents soon became reconciled to his treading a path in life different from their own. The minister not only approved of the plan, but congratulated Jamie on his prospects. Little by little Jamie came to receive more deference in his own family, and also in the neighborhood. Donald McPherson met him one day, and after a cordial greeting said to him,

"So ye are to be the man o' the parish, are ye, Jamie? We will a' hae to lift oor bonnets to you. Weel, ye will hae a grand chance, for Laird Erskine says that whatever John Cameron taks intil his heid has to gang through. He tells me Cameron lost a son aboot your ain age, and that is why he taks sic an interest in laddies."

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Autumn brought John Cameron again to Laird Erskine's. This time he saw more of Jamie, and he

told his kinsman that he would be glad to adopt him as a son. But the warm-hearted, simple-minded parents would not consent to this.

The time came when Jamie was to go to Edinburgh. Mrs. Murdoch took leave of her son with many tears. Honest Wullie had no tears, though he felt the pain of separation scarcely less than did the mother. He repeated his admonitions to virtue, and again warned him to shun every appearance of evil. "Wairldly wisdom is gude in its place," he said in conclusion, "but ye maunna forget to seek anither kind, for 'the wisdom that is frae aboon is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full o' mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.'"

CHAPTER XI. HOME LIFE.

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We will now leave Jamie in school and turn to the other children. Belle was now as old as Jamie was when he was put to work, and Jeannie feared that Wullie would soon speak about putting her to service. This would have seemed well enough, quite in keeping with the circumstances of the family, had it not been for Jamie's good fortune, which made it appear rather out of place. So the mother and daughter knitted for Mrs. Lindsay and others as they had opportunity, and the mother was always sure to buy Belle's clothes with the proceeds of the knitting. Annie was a bright little girl ten years old. She too was busy, for none were allowed to eat idle bread in honest Wullie's cottage. Wullie's own son David, or Davie as he was called, was also taught to save steps. But the most stir and activity was in the morning. No one was allowed to lie in bed after the sun was up. The mother called to any one who was likely to transgress this rule, "Come, dinna let the sun beat you up the morn." The girls attended school quite regularly in summer, but in winter they often did not attempt to walk the long distance. Then, when there were neither lessons nor out-of-door work, the balls of yarn fast disappeared and took other shapes. Annie, young as she was, did most of the knitting for the family.

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Honest Wullie thought himself a happy man; and so he was. In the evening, when he put labor and care alike aside, and looked around at the industrious, cheerful inmates of his well-kept home, he often thought, "Surely the lines hae fallen to me in pleasant places." Every day brought its work. In the morning the poultry was to be fed and the cows must be milked, besides the work indoors. In summer the garden was to be kept free from weeds, and the berries and wild fruits were to be gathered in their season. When there was no work to be done, the children were sometimes sent out with the order to "gang and play themselves;" but very often they were told to learn a Psalm first.

One thing they looked forward to, whether at work or at play, and that was a letter from Jamie. They had little else to break the monotonous days and the long winter evenings. True, Archie Lindsay came in sometimes, bringing his little sister with him; but that soon passed, and then nothing was heard but the click of the knitting-needles. Many times when the children were alone they told over threadbare riddles, simple rhymes learned at school, and the marvellous tales that tradition handed down to every new generation. They had no story books. They were always glad when Donald McPherson came in for an hour, for he never failed to have some news to tell. So passed the time until the early summer, when the children began to count the days that must elapse before Jamie should be at home again. All were anxious for his coming, but no one looked forward with so much longing as did the mother.

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CHAPTER XII. THE FIRST VACATION.

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"Jamie will be home the day!" the happy children shouted, as the wished-for morning at last arrived. He was expected to walk from the town where the stage-coach left him; but Mr. Lindsay remembered the lad that was coming from Edinburgh, and he made it convenient to have business in town that day. He brought Jamie home earlier in the day than he was expected.

Mrs. Murdoch was busy preparing some unusual delicacies to do honor to her returning son, and she did not notice his arrival. Jamie entered the open door, and, seeing that his mother did not turn to observe who came in, he thought he would surprise her. He walked softly, and she supposed him to be one of the other children. Jamie shook a warning finger at his sisters, and approaching his mother, he suddenly threw his arms about her neck and kissed her. She started, looked around, and joyfully exclaimed,

"O Jamie! hoo ye hae frightened me!" Then she kissed and embraced him in return. "Hoo are ye, my bairn? My! but ye are a'maist grawn a man! Ye are as tall as your mither!"

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The children then came forward and gave him a happy greeting. Belle, who had also changed, blushed as her brother complimented her on her improved appearance. Annie placed herself in front of him, with her arms akimbo, and with face brimful of happiness asked, "What think ye o'

me?"

"Think of you! I think you are the same sunny-faced little Annie, and I doubt not you are as good at a race as ever. I will try you to-morrow. Come here, Davie. Do you mind me?"

"Ay, I mind Jamie," said he, climbing on his knee.

"And Jamie minds that you like sugarplums."

"I like them oftener than I can get them."

"Well, let me see what I can find," said Jamie, putting his hand into his pocket and giving him a handful of candies. Then, tossing some to his sisters, he remarked, "You are looking very well, mother."

"I feel weel, and I hae plenty to eat and plenty to do; why s'ouldna I look weel?"

There was no lack of talk and no end of questions. As the afternoon advanced Annie was reminded that she must go and bring the cows from the pasture. [Pg 87]

"Jamie, will ye gang wi' me for the coos?"

"Yes, Annie, I will."

"Noo for a race," said Annie.

Long before they reached the pasture-lands Jamie was left in the rear. Annie, speeding on, came face to face with honest Wullie, who was working near the path. "Hoot, lassie! Why are ye rinnin' in sic a fashion?" he called out. "What would Jamie say if he s'ould see you gaen at sic a gate?"

"It is Jamie that is rinnin' wi' me," she replied, laughing.

Just then Jamie appeared, and Wullie's face relaxed. He hastened to meet him. "Welcome hame, Jamie! welcome hame!" he said, grasping his hand. "Hoo ye hae changed! but ye look weel."

"I am well. How are you, father?"

"I am vera weel. Thanks to the gude Lord, we are a' weel."

Then followed mutual inquiries and answers. Annie went after the cows, and Jamie remained with his father, whose day's work was not quite finished.

There was a happy family in honest Wullie's cottage that evening. The supper was the best the cottage could afford, for what company was so grand as Jamie! [Pg 88]

Jamie had improved very much in appearance, in manner, and in knowledge. His conversation interested both parents and children. His accounts of the city, of its buildings, and bits of history connected with them, were highly entertaining to the family whose horizon was so limited. All listened while he was talking. The conversation was prolonged to a late hour, and the children were allowed to sit up much after their usual bedtime.

In the morning all again paid homage to Jamie. He was the hero of the house and of the neighborhood. The neighbors all found opportunity to call at the cottage to see the lad who had been away at school. Archie Lindsay frequently spent the evening there, listening with wonder to all that Jamie had to tell.

The children were allowed more liberty for Jamie's sake, and the whole summer was a long gala day. Very little time was lost, however, for the girls were taught to use their fingers and ears at the same time. Even Jamie had not forgotten how to work. He spent many a day in the garden, the children at his side; for to them work was pleasure, if they could only be with brother Jamie.

The time for the return to Edinburgh came full soon for the children, and indeed for all. They had never tired of hearing the wonders of the outside world. Their narrow horizon had been widened. But Jamie was gone, and their lives slipped back into the old grooves. [Pg 89]

"Come, lassies, buckle to noo, and mak up time. I liked weel to see ye hae pleasant times wi' Jamie; but if ye are sensible lassies ye will see it wunna do to spend mair time in sic an easy way. There maun be nae lack o' the knitting-siller: ye ken weel what maun be dune wi' it."

Notwithstanding the mother's vigilance in preventing any approach to idleness, or even leisure, the children were well and happy.

CHAPTER XIII. BELLE.

[Pg 90]

Belle Murdoch had now reached her sixteenth year. She was tall, well-formed, fair, and a picture of perfect health. No allusion to her going out to service had yet been made. But the family expenses becoming each year heavier, the proposal so much dreaded by Mrs. Murdoch at length came.

Wullie had been ailing for a month, and he felt somewhat despondent. So one evening when the children were in bed, and husband and wife were sitting by the cheerful fire, Jeannie busied with mending little Davie's clothes, Wullie broached the subject as gently as he could.

"Ye are aye warking, Jeannie," he said, "and I am no idle when I am weel, and still I hae muckle to do to gie my family a' the comforts that I would like to gie them. I misdoot the judgment we use in keeping Belle at hame. She is a strang healthy lass noo, and I dinna see hoo I am to keep my heid aboon water unless the lassies as they get age and strength gang to service as ithers do, or find a better way to earn honest pennies."

"Weel, Wullie, I wouldna mind the lass gaen to service but for the way it has turned oot wi' Jamie. He will, nae doot, hae the sculing o' a born gentleman, and so be fitted to win his bread like ither gentlemen; and it looks no quite right to hae ane o' the same family oot at service, and that ane a lass, forbye."

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"I see, wifie, I see. And I hae thought o' the same thing. But right is right, and wrang is wrang; and rather than we s'ould gang beyond oor means and mak debts, we might better let her gang to a gude place."

"That is o'er true," said Jeannie, "and if things get muckle waur we'll hae to sacrifice oor wishes to oor necessities."

A few days after this conversation Farmer Lindsay came to honest Wullie's cottage. "Mistress Murdoch, I hae come to ask a favor," he began. "The gude-wife is taen ill, and we are pressed wi' the wark; will ye be sae kind as to let Belle come and stop wi' us a wee while till the wife is on her feet again?"

"Oh, ay, she can gang, and we are glad to oblige ye. Ye will find her no afraid o' wark; and she kens hoo to tak hold o' things as well as maist lassies o' her age."

Accordingly Belle made a few hasty preparations, and went immediately to Farmer Lindsay's. Mr. Lindsay conducted her to his wife's room. "Noo ye needna fash your heid about the wark," said he. "I hae brought ye a strang lass wi' willing hands, and a cheerfu' face that it will do your een gude to look at."

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"Ay, lass, it does a body gude to see ye the morn, ye are sae fresh and rosy," said Mrs. Lindsay. "I ken naebody that I would like better than yoursel to come into the hoose and help till I am able to tak my place again. Betty is a gude strang lass, but she canna do the wark o' twa, and sae we will be muckle obliged to ye if ye will stay wi' us and help her."

Belle proved the truth of her mother's statement concerning her. After Mrs. Lindsay recovered she still kept Belle with her. "She minds me o' the sang-birds, she is sae blithe and cheerfu'," said Mrs. Lindsay to her husband.

"Ay, she is a winsome lass, and I would like weel to hae ye keep her. Ye can keep baith lassies if ye like. Ye are no strang yoursel, and there is wark enouch for baith. But I dinna ken whether Wullie means to let her gang oot to service; I asked her to come only to do us a favor."

"Weel, if she will stop here she will be treated mair like a daughter than a servant."

"I wouldna wonder to see her a daughter some day, wifie. Archie thinks there is nae lass like Belle."

[Pg 93]

"He is welcome to think sae. I would liefer ken wha comes into the family. I dinna want a lass frae the toun, wha wouldna ken, perhaps, whether the dairy was clean or no, and that couldna mak butter nor cheese fit to gang to the market. Fine parritch and bannocks would then be made in this hoose; and wha kens whether the totties" (potatoes) "would come to the board cauld or het!"

"Ye are looking a lang way aheid, and coonting withoot your host," said Mr. Lindsay, laughing. "It would be weel to find oot first if they will let the lass stop wi' us."

Mrs. Murdoch had noticed the friendship between her daughter and Archie Lindsay, and she secretly hoped it would ripen into love. Now that Belle was so well liked by both the farmer and his wife, she thought circumstances were shaping towards the fulfilment of her desires, and, therefore, when asked whether Belle might remain at the farmhouse, she readily assented. So it was arranged that Belle should remain with Mrs. Lindsay.

Honest Wullie felt relieved. "When the burden is o'er heavy it is aye lightened," thought he; and he remarked to his wife, "Noo that we hae but twa to provide for, it may be that we s'all be able to lay by a wee bit for a weet day."

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It was not long before Belle began to be accompanied by Archie when she came in the evening to see her parents. No opposition was manifested, and very little comment was made; their association was regarded as a thing of course. Donald McPherson, who always saw at least all that was to be seen in the neighborhood, and was not diffident in giving voice to his thoughts, ventured to rally the mother on her prospective good fortune.

"I think, Mistress Murdoch," said Donald, "that your daughter will be staying her lifetime at the farmhouse. Weel, Archie is a clever lad, and Belle is a clever lass; I doot if they could be better mated. Hoo differently it has turned oot wi' Nellie McAllister!"

"What is wrang wi' Nellie?"

"Hae ye no heard about it? Why, she has rin awa wi' that gude-for-naught Langley that has been hinging about there sae lang."

"Ye dinna tell me that!"

"Ay, but I do tell ye; and that is nae the whole o' it. The lass has stolen a' the gear she could pit her hands on. Mrs. McAllister is a'maist as daft as Jamie himsel."

"Weel, weel, weel! That is waur than I expected," exclaimed honest Wullie; "but ane never kens when trouble may come under his ain roof." [Pg 95]

"It is a sair trouble, neebor, a sair trouble; and yet they couldna expect a blessing on their ill-gotten gain."

"That is vera true, vera true, Donald. I am mair and mair convinced that there is but ane way to do, and that is to do right. I am puir, and I expect to stay sae, but it is a peaceful pillow I put my heid on when night comes around."

"Weel, I dinna think Mrs. McAllister will ever ken sic a pillow under her heid. Punishment comes slowly sometimes; but it comes, for a' that. I maun say I am thankfu' I got oot o' the clutches o' the de'il as soon as I did; and yet he held me lang eneuch to gar me tak shame to mysel whenever I think o' it. Ay, I am angry as weel as ashamed when I think how I fuled awa my siller till Katy had but ane gown till her back. It is a sin and a shame for a man to mak sic a beast o' himsel!"

"That it is," said Wullie, pressing his lips tightly together, and nodding more than once in an affirmative manner. "I wish ilka stoup that is filled wi' grog would snap in twain before it reached the lips o' ony ane."

"Weel, if that s'ould be, there is mony a tongue would lap it frae the floor but they would hae it," said Donald. [Pg 96]

"Hoo is that lad o' Daft Jamie's likely to turn oot?" asked Wullie.

"Bad eneuch. What but a miracle would save him? He is aye standin' in the bar-room. His mither brought him there when he couldna mair than toddle; and he has aye been sippin' and lickin' at the stoups folk set down. Noo he does mair: he taks his dram like ony ither ne'er-do-weel, so I am tauld. I dinna gang there to see it, ye ken."

"Weel, by the look o' it, they will a' gang to ruin thegither."

"I had a'maist said, 'The de'il may care,' but I wanna. I wanna wish evil on ony ane; neither will I think sae lightly o' the ills which befa' ony o' the human family."

"That last is weel said. We maun not only wish nae ill to ony ane, but if we can, we maun help up the fallen and lead to firm groun' those that stand in slippery places."

Donald, who could not long be silent, turned to Annie and asked, "Hoo like ye the new sculemaister?"

"I like him vera weel," said little Annie, blushing to find herself addressed.

"That lad o' mine thinks he is o'er strict; but I think Donald doesna mind his books as he s'ould." [Pg 97]

"Donald is o'er fond o' fun," said Annie, smiling, for she was thinking of his many pranks and grimaces behind the teacher's back.

"He is like his faither before him. I had aye mair nonsense than sense in my heid when I went to scule, and what wi' ane trick and anither my lessons cam oot slim. Ane auld maister got angry wi' me, and I will tell ye hoo it cam aboot. As I said, I was up to mony pranks, and he would aye wink at them when he could wi' ony decency; but I went too far: I tried a trick on the maister himsel; I put a bee in his bonnet. I was a'maist sorry as soon as I had done it; but a wheen o' the lads thought it was fine fun, so I didna shake it oot as I had a mind to do mair than ance. As may be supposed, the bee stung the maister on the tap o' his heid. My! but was he no ravin'! When the scule was called for the afternoon he set himsel to find oot wha had pit the bee in his bonnet. I felt my face graw red, but I took wonderfully to my books. I warrant I hadna minded them sae weel for mony a day. Weel, the maister eyed every lad in the sculeroom. After a bit he said,

"Donald McPherson, ye arena wont to mind your book sae weel. Your conduct looks suspicious." [Pg 98]

"Noo I wasna a bold, hardened lad, sae I lookit mair and mair guilty.

"Donald, ken ye hoo that bit beastie cam in my bonnet?" asked the maister.

"I didna answer him. Ane o' the lads spoke up: 'Maister, the bee could easily get in the bonnet without being pit there.'

"Whist! Ye needna pit him up to lee aboot it. I ken by the look o' him that he has dune it, but he will fare better if I hae the truth frae his own mou'. Donald, I will ask ye ance mair, did ye pit that bee in my bonnet?"

"I canna deny it, maister,' I stammered oot.

"It is weel for you that ye didna; but ye s'all feel the tips o' the taws for a' that.'

"And did I no? My certie, but that taws was het! Weel, I didna play ony mair tricks on the maister, I can assure you."

"Nor s'ould you," said Wullie. "It is a' wrang. But mony laddies hae thoughtless heids."

"Ay hae they; but lassies hae na, hae they, Annie? I hear ye stand at the heid o' your class; hoo is that?"

"Whiles I am there, and whiles Maggie Lindsay is there."

"Weel, it is a pleasant thing to see bairns fond o' books. But I am staying o'er lang. I will be gaen noo. Gude-night to ye a'." [Pg 99]

"Wifie, we hae muckle reason to be thankfu'," said Wullie, after Donald was gone. "Surely His banner over us is love." Thus did honest Wullie acknowledge the goodness of God. And though his was a life of unremitting toil and care, he daily found cause to say, "Praise the gude Lord!"

Both the children now attended school, and, as has been intimated, Annie made rapid progress. She was not as pretty as Belle, but she was even more interesting. She resembled her father somewhat. She had the same large, dark, lustrous eyes; she was lively, witty, and fond of company. The mother, who was reminded of the father through his child, often said to herself, "I am glad that bairn is a lass." Annie received many pretty presents from Belle. Indeed, she seldom went to see her at the farmhouse without bringing away a knot of ribbon, or some proof of sisterly affection, trifling though it was. Farmer Lindsay was always glad to have Annie come to his house. He was unlike honest Wullie, and he often joked with the child in order to draw out her powers of repartee. Mrs. Lindsay also enjoyed the fun. But thoughtful Belle would sometimes shake her head, as if to say, "Ye maunna, Annie." Sometimes Annie took Davie with her. He always returned with his pockets crammed with cream-cakes and apples. When they would hold no more, Mrs. Lindsay would say to the child, "Tell your mither no to mak your pockets sae sma'." [Pg 100]

CHAPTER XIV. ARCHIE AND BELLE.

[Pg 101]

More than two years passed pleasantly by, and Belle was still at the farmhouse. She had indeed been treated like a daughter of the house, and Archie had been more than brotherly. He never went from home to find amusement. After the day of toil he spent the evening in Belle's society—in winter in the cheerful living-room, in summer they sat on a rustic seat under the trees that sheltered the house from the winter's wind and the summer's sun; or they strolled together in the gloaming, frequently extending their walk to honest Wullie's cottage. Many expressions of tenderness had fallen from Archie's lips, and many a look of love had not escaped Belle's notice; so when, one evening as they were returning from her father's house, he addressed her on the subject nearest to his heart, she was not surprised. Let us not attempt to repeat their words. To those who love each other such words are too sacred to reach the ear or meet the eye of the great world; they belong exclusively to the little world of which they two are the only inhabitants. Let it suffice to say that thereafter they worked with still lighter hearts, happy in the present, and with a happy future in anticipation. [Pg 102]

When Belle reached her nineteenth birthday they were married.

Great was the joy of Mrs. Murdoch to see her daughter so well settled in life. She would probably never know the want of anything essential to her comfort. A busy life of honest toil was before her; but toil is what these simple people expected, what they desired. To them idleness, not labor, was a disgrace.

Belle returned to her mother's cottage a month before the marriage. It was a busy month. All that hands could do to put the little house in order was joyfully done. Then there were new clothes to be made for all, for all must look their best on Belle's wedding-day. Jamie was at home. It was the time of his vacation.

The time passed too quickly for all that was to be done. When the wedding-morning came, and all the happy family appeared in festive attire, Mrs. Murdoch herself becomingly dressed, her face beaming from the soft lace of her new cap-frill, no wonder that the heart of this once lonely, suffering woman swelled with maternal pride and with gratitude to God that so much good had fallen to her lot. Here were her two children who once had been the only sharers of her nightly vigils, the son nearly educated, and about to move in a sphere far above the loftiest flights of her early thoughts, and the daughter the happy bride of a prosperous young farmer. [Pg 103]

The minister arrived, and the happy pair were united according to God's ordinance. Many and cordial were the congratulations of the guests; and many compliments to the bride's beauty were whispered among the simple-hearted neighbors. Even Donald McPherson remarked to his wife that he had never seen a bonnier bride. "Ay," said Katy, "she is bonny, and she has the grace o' a born ledly."

After an hour spent in conversation the guests were seated at the table, which, for the second time, was spread with a bountiful wedding-feast.

When the guests had dispersed, Mrs. Murdoch busied herself with restoring things somewhat to their wonted order; her thoughts were no less busy than her hands. "Oor life is unco checkered, Wullie," she said; "but still God has never gien us sae many sorrows as to overwhelm us, nor sae many joys as to turn oor heids. When we are a'maist fainting for fear o' the darkness, he sends light; and when we are o'er muckle exalted in oor feelings, he gars us through some turn o' his providence to come down."

"That is weel said, wifie. Ane canna fail to see the Faither's gudeness in sic management o' us. But I think we wouldna need the bit and bridle sae often if we would tak God's gifts without forgetting wha sent them. God's children a' hae their chastisements; the Book says they maun hae them; but I trow the humble get far less than the proud and rebellious. I hope oor bairns will no hae to be sae muckle buffeted before they seek the rest that is provided for them aneath the sheltering wing of the Almighty. Annie is like Rab; hae ye never noticed it?" [Pg 104]

"I hae seen it; but sin' she is a lass, I hae nae fears for her. Rab had nae fauts forbye drinking, ye ken."

"He was a'maist too heidstrang; but I wouldna mak mention o' it, savin' for Annie's sake. She would hae her ain way too if she wasna held wi' a strang hand. But we will gie her wi' the rest o' oor dear anes to the keeping o' the gude Lord. He kens best the way each maun be led."

CHAPTER XV. ANNIE.

 [Pg 105]

Time passed and brought the usual changes to the family of honest Wullie. Jamie had finished his college course with honor, and was now a teacher in one of the high schools of Edinburgh. Davie could no longer be called "the wee lad." He took his place beside his father, and with his youthful vigor performed as much labor as Wullie with his declining strength. Annie was now in the full flush of early womanhood. Her dark eyes, rosy cheeks, and bewitching manner had already won the admiration of many "neebor lads," who did not fail to get a sight of her every Sunday in the kirk. But she had completely captured the heart of Donald McPherson, Jr. To his great annoyance she did not seem to reciprocate his affection. But knowing her to be lively and wilful, he hoped she only feigned indifference and did not mean to allow herself to be lightly won.

It was at this time that a nephew of John Cameron came to spend a few weeks at Laird Erskine's. He had been educated with Jamie, and, as was quite natural, he called at the cottage to deliver a message and some presents from Jamie. In one of his rambles he took occasion to call a second time. He chatted pleasantly with Annie, and was pleased with her artless simplicity. When he was about to return to Edinburgh he called again to say good-by. He gave his hand to Annie as he took leave, and with a pleasant smile remarked, "I hope I shall see you again." [Pg 106]

Poor Annie! It was the first time a fine gentleman had talked with her. She could not but observe the refinement of his manner and conversation. She contrasted him with the rustic lads of the neighborhood, and they sank into insignificance. She remembered his looks and his words, and pondered them in her heart. How she wished she had been born a lady, or had been educated like her brother Jamie! Her sunny face lost some of its color. She moved about her work mechanically, her thoughts wandering in the cloud-land of her imagination.

Mrs. Murdoch noticed the change in her daughter's manner. "What ails ye, lass, that ye dinna talk ony mair? Are ye no weel?" she asked.

"I am quite weel," said Annie, "but I dinna feel like talking."

Donald McPherson had been steadily gaining property ever since he stopped drinking. He now had sufficient means to stock a farm which he rented. He had also gained respectability by honest dealing with his neighbors and by a strict attendance at church. He had merited and gained the coveted name of douce Donald, which was not misapplied. Donald, Jr., being the only child, and of steady habits, Mrs. Murdoch placed no obstacle in the way of an intimate friendship between him and her daughter. In fact, she considered him a very suitable person to sue for Annie's hand. He was warmly received by all at the cottage; but Annie never showed him any preference above the other lads of the neighborhood. Her mother had long since realized that Wullie was right when he intimated that she was "heidstrang." Mrs. Murdoch was at a loss to know how to approach her daughter, for fear of driving her in the wrong direction; therefore she wisely concluded to let the matter alone. But young McPherson, who saw nothing in the way of settling in life, offered her his hand. She declined the offer. He was loath to accept a refusal. He pressed his suit, telling her that he had always thought of her as his future wife. [Pg 107]

"Ye hae taen far too muckle for granted," she replied, "for I canna wed wi' you."

Donald's visits were discontinued. The mother, ascertaining the cause of his prolonged absence, remonstrated with her daughter. [Pg 108]

"Annie, lass, what hae ye dune to young Donald?"

"I hae refused him, as was my privilege," she replied, with an independent toss of her head.

"Can ye no see where your interest lies? Donald is a clever lad, and would gie you a gude hame; and a' would be your ain when his faither and mither are gane."

"I dinna want a better hame than I have noo," retorted Annie; "and it is lang waiting for dead folks' shoon."

"Ye will drive the lad a'maist daft wi' your stubborn ways."

"Little danger o' that; but I canna help it if I do. Auld Muckle Geordie might tak it in his heid to gang daft aboot me; would I hae to marry him?" she asked, with a merry twinkle in her mischievous eyes.

The mother laughed despite her efforts to the contrary, for Auld Muckle Geordie was an old lame piper supported by charity.

"Noo be a canny lass," she continued, resuming the stern expression of her countenance. "Auld Muckle Geordie has naething to do wi' Donald, who isna quite twa years older than yoursel, and naething can be said against him."

[Pg 109]

"I didna say onything against him. I only meant to shaw that a lass canna always wed ony ane that sets his heart on her."

"Ay, ony ane, to be sure! But where would ye find a better lad than Donald? Dinna pit your dish tapside doun when it rains parritch."

"Weel, mither, it will hae to rain parritch frae anither quarter before I set my dish to catch it."

"Annie, ye can never be tauld onything. But I hae kenned folk wha decided sae speedily that they had to repent at leisure."

Donald took the matter more to heart than Annie had anticipated. Wishing to get away from scenes that were constant reminders of his chagrin and unhappiness, he left home and took passage in a vessel bound to the West Indies. Annie then received cold looks from more than one pair of eyes. Mr. and Mrs. McPherson regarded her as the disturber of their peace and the desolater of their home. They could see no reason why their son should be refused by Annie Murdoch or any other lass. Even Annie's mother was reserved in manner towards her. But her native wit and vivacity often served her a good turn when the subject was broached, and she generally parried their censure with a counterstroke that made her victorious. So things remained till Jamie came again.

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Jamie, though so learned and so well received in Edinburgh society, did not forget his parents in their humble home. Every year he spent with them at least a part of the summer, and they were none the poorer for his visit. From the time he first received a salary he had every year sent them a generous remittance; and when he visited them he did not come empty-handed. His coming was always anticipated with eager pleasure; and now when he arrived all were delighted. He took an interest in all their simple home affairs, and always inquired about the welfare of the neighbors. He liked to sit and talk with his mother. During a conversation with her he chanced to ask her how she liked young Mr. Cameron. Annie turned away her face at the mention of his name. She felt the hot blood rush to her cheeks; but it soon receded, for Jamie followed his question with the statement that Cameron was soon to be married to his cousin.

Annie, pale and trembling, sought the door.

"What ails thee, Annie?" asked the anxious mother; but receiving no answer, the truth flashed on her mind. "Puir lass!" said she; but Annie, refusing sympathy, withdrew from her mother, and hurried out to conceal her emotion.

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"What ails Annie?" asked Jamie.

"I see it a' noo," replied his mother. "I ken why she refused young Donald McPherson. The puir lass maun hae lo'ed young Cameron."

Jamie was astonished. He questioned his mother, and learned that Cameron had been at the cottage but three times. "He is a kind-hearted, noble young man. I do not wonder that my little sister admired him; but it was folly to fall in love with him. Let us deal gently with the girl, and turn her thoughts in other directions."

The day passed; night wrapped the earth in darkness; bird, beast, and human creatures rested in sleep, save where the solitary lamp burned dimly in the sick-room or the aching heart forbade the eyes to slumber. Annie retired to her bed, but sleep came not. She had been rudely wakened from her young life's happy dream; could she ever sleep again! In vain she tried to dismiss her thoughts and find rest.

Finally she rose from her bed and stole softly to the window. Looking out of its narrow casement, she saw in the distance the outline of a clump of silver birches; then catching the scent of the clover from the meadow and the wild rose from the hedgerow, she said mentally, "This world is too bonny for tears. And why should I grieve for one who perhaps never gave me a second thought, and whom I had no right to love? It was but a childish fancy. I am no longer a child. From this hour I am a woman. I will tear his image from my heart, and be content with the lot that God has given me."

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The midnight air cooled her brow and quieted her throbbing brain and aching heart. She again

sought her couch, and soon fell into a peaceful slumber. The next morning she was calm, but not sad. Reason had prevailed.

Her mother was surprised at her self-control; but she said not a word to Annie upon the subject that was most in both their thoughts. Neither did Annie ever mention to any one her struggle and her victory. If she had supposed that any one possessed her secret, her mortification would have been as great as her grief.

Jamie felt sorry for his sister, but he did not dare tell her so. He only gave her his parting presents, bade her a cheerful good-by, and returned to his post.

CHAPTER XVI. RECONSIDERED.

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More years passed, bringing two sweet bairns into the home of Archie Lindsay. Still Annie Murdoch would neither be wooed nor wedded. Whether the ever alert Donald McPherson suspected that she had changed her mind and was waiting for his son, and communicated his suspicions to the one most concerned, is not known; but at length there came a letter saying that young Donald was coming home; and it was reported that he would bring a heavy purse.

Great was the joy of his parents, for they were growing old and longed to lay their cares on younger shoulders. Soon a sun-browned man knocked at their door. Katy McPherson cast on him a long, searching glance, and exclaimed, "Donald, my bairn! Donald, my bairn! Ye are welcome hame!"

As to the father, he was very happy and very proud. He spoke the praises of his son into every listening ear.

Donald was glad to be at home again. He inquired about all the neighbors, and particularly after honest Wullie's family.

"Annie is no married. I think she is waiting for you, Donald," said his mother.

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On the evening of the third day after his return he dressed himself with great care, and announced that he was going to honest Wullie's to see how the folk looked.

Annie had been early apprised of Donald's arrival. She kept her thoughts to herself; but she was unusually particular about her personal appearance, and wore the knot of ribbon that was most becoming to her. But as the days passed and Donald did not appear, she began to think he was in no haste to see her. However, at last he came. He was most cordially received by all the family, Annie not excepted.

Donald was much improved by his residence abroad. He chatted pleasantly and interestingly of scenes and things he had observed during his absence, and all were sorry when the lateness of the hour warned him that it was time to leave.

"Ye hae gien us a pleasant evening, Donald," said Mrs. Murdoch. "I hope it will no be long till ye come again."

"That will be as Annie says."

"I will promise no to keep ony bloodhounds about," said Annie, laughing.

"Ye will have to promise mair than that."

"Weel, I will promise no to keep ony doggies o' a savage nature."

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"Mair than that," said he, shaking his head.

"Weel, then, I will promise to bid you a pleasant gude evening as often as ye choose to come."

"That will do. On the strength of that promise I shall be right neeborly."

Bidding them good night, he went home with fresh hopes kindled in his bosom.

The purse Donald brought home with him did much towards improving the farm stock and utensils, besides furnishing the house more comfortably. After this outlay there was still left a small sum, which Donald put at interest. "It would be gude for a rainy day," he said.

It would seem that Donald's second attempt at courtship was more successful than the first, for six months after his return he was married to Annie Murdoch.

"That is noo as it s'ould be," said honest Wullie. "It aye lookit to me that it maun come to that yet; but some folk are lang in seeing what is for their gude."

Douce Donald, as he was now always called, to distinguish him from his son, could not quite forget his son's former trouble. He said to Annie, half jestingly, "Ye s'ouldna hae taen sae lang a time to mak up your mind, ye wilfu' puss."

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"Never mind that now, faither," said Donald. "Ye wouldna have had sae saft an auld age without

the gear that came of my disappointment."

When Donald and Annie had been married a twelvemonth a daughter was born to them. Great was the joy in the household. The grandfather was hardly less pleased than the father. He went to honest Wullie's to communicate his gladness and to congratulate him.

"We hae a fine granddaughter, neebor Murdoch. The sight o' her will be gude for oor auld een. If the gude Lord spares her till us, she will beguile the lang weary hours o' auld age."

"Ay, it is gude to see young faces when we are auld; but I think ye will find your hours nane too lang, neebor McPherson. God gies to nane o' us mair time than we need."

"Weel, then, she s'all help me to graw young again."

"Ay, that will do. Keep a young heart in your auld body, and ye will weary naebody."

"Hoo comes it that ye are sae wise, neebor Murdoch?"

"I dinna think mysel wise."

"But ye aye gie gude advice."

"Weel, we hae this promise in the gude Book, 'They s'all a' be taught of God.' It may be that I hae been taught o' the Spirit. Warldly wisdom I hae nane, or next to nane; but I ken weel that the wisdom that God gies to those that ask it will be better to haud to when passing frae this to the untried warld than a' the wisdom o' the wisest men."

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CHAPTER XVII. DAVIE.

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We have now seen Robert Murdoch's children all happily settled in life. God's promises to the fatherless had not failed. Only Wullie's own son Davie is left at home, and the years have rolled by till he is now nearly as old as his father was when we first made his acquaintance.

School never had any charms for Davie. He could read and write, and he possessed some knowledge of arithmetic. Beyond this he did not care to go. But he did love hard work, and the harder the better. He loved to drive the plough and put in the sickle. "He is honest Wullie over again," was the unanimous verdict of the whole neighborhood.

Meanwhile the father's strength was failing. It often happened that when Wullie was going to his work in the noonday heat Farmer Lindsay called to him from the cool porch where he was sitting, "Come, sit ye doun and crack a while wi' me, Wullie, and let younger men lead in the wark noo."

Davie, too, urged his father to take life more easily. "Ye hae lang borne the burden and heat o' the day; sit doun noo and rest. I hae the strength and the will to provide for a' the wants o' those wha hae provided for me when I couldna do it for mysel."

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Jamie with his annual remittance sent this message: "Make yourself and mother comfortable, and do not go to your work on bad days. Save your strength when you can; it will please me better if you do not work at all. You have labored enough for a lifetime. I hope to supply many of your wants myself; but you have also Davie to look after you."

"Ay, we hae Davie, and we hae mony freends and mony comforts. Truly, the Lord is gude to all that put their trust in him," said Wullie to his wife.

"Ay, Wullie; and yet I canna but wish that Davie was mair like Jamie. He wouldna hae to wark sae hard," said the mother.

"Leave Davie to his ain choice, wifie. He canna be as Jamie is. Jamie likes to gang oot in the warld, and muckle can be said in his praise, for he is as gude a mon as I could wish, forbye his learning. But Davie taks after his faither. He lo'es best the wild moorlands and crags, the green hillocks, the scent o' the newly-turned sod, the lowing o' the herds, the crawling o' the cocks, and the voice of the sang-birds. He is a' that is left to us noo. How could we get on without Davie?"

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Mrs. Murdoch, too, began to feel the approach of age. The noon of her life was long past, and she had toiled unremittingly. She desired to sit down now and rest a while in the evening shade. She thought it time that Davie should bring a wife to the cottage.

But Davie seemed never seriously to think of such a thing, notwithstanding various hints from his mother. Every year she felt less able to do the work of the cottage; she was lonely also, for she liked to have some one to talk to; but since Annie went away she spent most of the day in solitude. She therefore made a direct appeal to Davie.

"Davie, I canna live always; why do ye no tak a wife to yoursel? I am sure there is room eneuch here; and there is nae lack o' gear. Ye s'ould hae a wife as weel as ony other man."

"I dinna see ony lass that I would care to tak to the parson wi' me. A' the gude lassies hae been taen."

"There is aye gude fish in the sea!"

"But I canna hae the luck to catch them."

Weary of waiting for Davie to bring a wife, she sent to Wigtown for her niece and namesake, Jeannie Craig, to come and live with her. [Pg 121]

Whether this was a plot on the part of the mother is not known; but certain it is that David married his cousin; and the neighbors said the mother had done the courting. If this be so she did her son a very great favor, for no one could have filled the place better or made him a better wife.

"She minds me of oor Belle," Davie said aside to his mother the first day she came to the cottage. And she was like Belle in her cheerful, gentle ways.

CHAPTER XVIII. A REST BY THE WAYSIDE.

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Honest Wullie and his wife could now spend the evening of life in quiet, peaceful comfort. Their cup of happiness was full. All their children were married and lived comfortably. Jamie had married in Edinburgh, and he had a beautiful home, with children to gladden it. There was no happier wife than Belle Lindsay, and Archie thought there could be no better one. Archie's family lived in one part of the farmhouse. There his sweet-tempered wife still warbled tender home melodies while busy with her work, and at nightfall sang soft, sweet lullabies to the fair-haired babe. Annie and Donald were never sorry that they had waited for each other. Several children blessed them with hope and claimed their care and labor. The marriage of Davie had brought no innovation to Wullie's home. His daughter-in-law stepped quietly and aptly into the place his wife had filled as mistress and manager. Mrs. Murdoch, unencumbered with care, could now sit by her husband at the hearthstone, or in summer on a rustic seat on the shady side of the house. Her knitting was usually in her hand; so accustomed was she to this kind of work that she could almost have done it sleeping, and she would have felt lost without it. [Pg 123]

Farmer Lindsay also divested himself of many of the cares of life. He had no anxiety about the management of the farm; Archie was as good a farmer as himself. Mrs. Lindsay had gradually given the care of household affairs to her daughter-in-law, and now Belle had entire control. "I ken noo that Archie's parritch is weel made and his bannocks weel baked; and a' the wark is weel dune and naething wasted," she said to her husband.

Their daughter, still unmarried, was with them to anticipate their wishes. Thus this ageing pair were resting from their labors and gliding gently down the slope of life.

The vine-hung porch was often the resort of Farmer Lindsay. He loved to sit there in the dreamy afternoons, enlivening the hours with tales of olden time. His wife often sat beside him. Here a goodly view was spread out before them. To one side lay the out-buildings, the orchard, and the meadows that extended far beyond honest Wullie's cottage. On the other side rose the hills covered with mountain-ash and dwarf-oaks. The birds sang in the shade-trees, and the timid hares gambolled in the hedgerow, or gazed at them with soft eyes when no danger threatened. Among the hills were the pasture-lands; and the tinkle of the herd-bell was often borne to their ears by the balmy breath of the south wind. [Pg 124]

Occasionally honest Wullie, accompanied by his wife, slowly climbed the little rise of ground that lay between the cottage and the farmhouse. There was always a kindly welcome and inquiries after the health of each other. The bairns, too, must be called and told "no to be shy, but to gang up and speak to their grandparents." Honest Wullie always asked many questions about the farm-work, for he loved to hear the praises of Davie. When he stayed to break bread with his daughter they all ate together, and spent a social hour at table. Wullie was listened to with the greatest respect, for he always had something good and sensible to say.

When they went home some of the Lindsays accompanied them a part of the way, as not to have done so would have been considered discourteous.

To Annie's home Wullie no longer attempted to walk; but Donald brought her parents twice a year to pay her a visit. These visits were always enjoyable, for Annie spared no pains to please her parents. "Annie behaves doucelly," was honest Wullie's comment after returning home. [Pg 125]

Jamie still came once a year to the cottage.

"Now that Davie is married," he said to his father, "I would like to have you and mother come and spend some time with me."

"I am too auld to leave hame, Jamie; but if I could gang, what would I do in Edinburgh? I would a'maist as soon be buried alive. Na, na, Jamie, I couldna do that; I couldna leave my auld hame. Here I hae lived, and here let me dee. I a'maist feel I couldna lo'e God as weel where I couldna see him in his warks. Na, na, Jamie, leave me where I can hear the sang o' the laverock, [\[A\]](#) the mavis, [\[B\]](#) and the cushat; [\[C\]](#) where the burn wimples and the daisy and the heather bloom; where the darkness fa's softly and the stars blink bonnily; where the sun wunna rise far before I

can see the face o' it. Na, Jamie, Edinburgh is nae place for auld Wullie Murdoch."

Jamie knew that his father was right.

"I suppose no other place would seem to you like home," he replied; "but I would like to manifest the filial regard I feel for my parents."

Jamie then resolved to coax Davie to Edinburgh. He thought it would give his brother some idea of the world around him. Besides, he was a little curious to see the amazement with which his unsophisticated brother would view the wonders of the Scottish capital. It was, however, a long time before he succeeded in getting him there; but several summers after he had first proposed the journey Davie returned with him to Edinburgh. On their way they stopped at Glasgow. As Davie had so little desire for sight-seeing, he was more than satisfied with his short stay in that city, and wished then to return home; but Jamie persuaded him to go on to Edinburgh and Linlithgow. He pointed out to his brother the places of historic interest, the ancient fortresses, palaces, and ruins. None of these stirred his heart like old Grayfriars' Church, where, on the first of March, 1638, the first signatures were set to the National Covenant that bound Scotland to resist the civil and ecclesiastical tyranny of Charles I.; Grayfriars' churchyard, with its memories of martyr Covenanters; and the old national fortress, the Castle Rock. The sight of these stirs the heart of every true Scotchman, for all are associated with Scottish struggles for liberty. There was little else he could appreciate, although the magnificent churches impressed him with their grandeur, and recalled to his mind the description of the only one with which he was familiar, that grander temple reared by Solomon. The bells, too, with their solemn, sonorous call, filled him with reverential awe. Everything else wearied him. The handsome dwellings, the public buildings, the long rows of shops and markets, were tiresome to him; and the sound of the town-crier he would gladly have exchanged for the tinkle of the bell from the sheepfold. He did not feel at ease even in his brother's house. He considered everything too bonny to touch, and he failed to divest himself of the feeling of restraint until he again beheld the simple cottages, the moors and glens of Ayrshire. However, after he reached home he remembered that he had seen many fine sights, and he was really glad that he had made the journey; but he was equally glad that there was no prospect of having to repeat it.

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In the city he had remembered his nephews and nieces, and he brought them each a present, small though it was. But for his wife he brought a "braw new gown," to which he often afterwards referred with a good deal of complacency as "the gown I brought frae Edinburgh." His wife usually smiled secretly, saying to herself, "I will hae to tak gude care o' it, for it will be mony a lang day before he brings me anither frae there."

FOOTNOTES:

[A] Lark.

[B] Thrush.

[C] Wood-pigeon.

CHAPTER XIX. LENGTHENING SHADOWS.

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Let us now look at our friends ten years later. We find some of them at life's sunset. But no storms of adversity have marred the serenity of the declining day of these simple people. Honest Wullie's years have already numbered more than fourscore. The locks that adorn his temples are no longer gray, but white. His frame is bent with labor and years.

Gradually he had left the heavier work to younger hands, and after a few years he had ceased to take his place among the laborers. In summer, however, he still planted and cultivated his little garden, and in winter he took care of the cows and kept the fires burning. But the time came when spade, mattock, and hoe were laid aside, and honest Wullie occupied his easy-chair. This was sorely against his will, as he said, for he liked to be of use to his family; but the infirmities of age left him no choice.

Then it was that the beauty of his soul shone forth in a clearer light, proving that "they also serve who only stand and wait." Always cheerful himself, he encouraged the despondent, mildly reproved those who were unduly elated, arrogant, or unyielding, and meted out to each the counsel most needed.

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He looked patriarchal among his children and grandchildren, who vied with each other in manifesting their regard for him. He loved to have his grandchildren near him, and he often smiled at their innocent amusements. His wife, several years younger than himself, was still in good health. She was most attentive to the comfort of her aged husband, who for so many years had been her stay and support. Both were mindful of the many mercies that had attended them during their long life.

"When I look at you, Wullie, wi' sae mony comforts and sae few cares, and at a' our children sae weel provided for, I am reminded o' David of auld when he said, 'I have been young, and now am

auld; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.' Ay, Wullie, the blessings o' the righteous man hae been gien to you."

"Ay, Jeannie, we hae had a lang life, and mony joys as weel as sorrows. The Lord aye gies his children what is best for them. He remembereth our frame; he knoweth we are but dust, and he doesna pit upon us what we are no able to bear."

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In the very evening of his days he had the pleasure of seeing his benefactor, the donor of the ten-pound note, whom he not only thanked and blessed, but whose bounty he offered to repay. "No, no, honest Wullie," said the good man, "I have never been the poorer for that gift, nor for any other given in like manner."

And now we come to the close of the good man's earthly pilgrimage. The chair in the chimney nook is vacant, and on the bed lies the once strong and active William Murdoch. The helplessness of age and exhaustion is upon him. He has no malady; he is simply passing away. The silver cord is being loosed, the golden bowl is being broken.

The sun was slowly sinking. The soft summer breeze came in at the cottage window and puffed the snowy curtains at either side. Order and quiet prevailed. Near the bed sat the faithful wife. Her knitting was not in her hands, neither was it in her lap. She sat with a sad yet composed expression on her face, thinking of the past, the present, and the future, all of which seemed now to be brought together. Near the ingle sat a younger, matronly woman, hushing an infant to rest. In her we recognize Annie McPherson, the same Annie, but ripened and softened by added years. From the farmhouse came tripping down the path a sprightly blooming girl, who reminded one of Belle. This was Alice Lindsay, Isabel's oldest child, come to say that her mother would be over to spend the night. She stooped and kissed her sleeping grandfather, and after asking her grandmother if there was anything she could do, she went out to her aunt Jeannie, who was milking the cows.

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"Aunt Jeannie," she began, "are ye no weary? Let me milk ane o' the coos."

"Na, Alice, I am a'maist dune. Gang and talk wi' your cousins yonder; they are greetin' aboot their grandfather. I hae but noo tauld them that he must soon dee."

Alice went to the rear of the cottage: there on a pile of sticks sat two fine little lads, whom Davie had quite naturally named Wullie and Jamie. They saw their cousin approaching, and tried to dry their tears on the back of their hands. She sat down between them and put her arm around Jamie, while Wullie dropped his head in her lap and sobbed out,

"Grandfaither is going to dee, Alice. He is gaen awa frae us, and they will pit him in a box and nail him doun, and pit him in the groun', and he wanna win oot till the resurrection morn, mither says, and we canna mak oot when that will be. Then there will be naebody to pat oor heids when we come to the ingle. Grandmither aye knits, and she never pats oor heids, and says, 'Puir wee lads! puir wee lads!'"

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"Grandfather is going to dee, Alice."

"My puir wee lads," said Alice, "ye will hae freends left to you still. Do ye no ken that grandfather wearies to be awa wi' his Faither in heaven? Ye canna understand all about it noo, Wullie, but ye will some time. Grandfather is an auld man, and he canna get the pleasure oot o' the warld that ye can. He canna rin about the green fields here; but yonder where he is gaen he will be made young again, and then he will walk in the green fields o' the heavenly warld, and never graw auld ony more. Sae dry your tears, that is a wee man; grandfather wouldna like ye to greet sae sairly."

Now they heard footsteps, and, looking up, the lads saw their father coming down the home-path with quickened steps, for he was anxious to know how his father was. As he neared the door he slackened his pace and entered the cottage as noiselessly as possible. He stepped to the bedside and gazed on his father; as he turned away a heavy sigh escaped him.

After Alice had comforted her little cousins she hastened home, and her mother came. The twilight had deepened into night; the cottage door was closed and the candle lighted. In the room were now gathered all the children except Jamie, and of him all were thinking. [Pg 133]

"I think your faither is nearer his end than we thought," said the mother. "I ken weel Jamie would like to be here."

"I think we should have sent for him," said Belle.

"I think sae myself," said Davie.

"Annie, ye gang and write a letter till him right awa," said the mother.

Annie promptly obeyed, going into another room, and the conversation continued. They talked without restraint, for if their father should wake he was too deaf to understand ordinary conversation.

"I fear it isna possible for Jamie to come in time to see his faither alive," said Belle.

"I think he willna live the week oot," said Davie.

The mother sat with closed eyes and folded hands. "Jamie was aye fond o' his faither; he was aye a gude lad," she said, thinking aloud.

"Ay, he was that, and his gude fortune hasna spoiled him, either," replied Isabel.

"It would be hard to spoil Jamie, I think," said Davie. "I often thought o' that when I was wi' him [Pg 134]

in Edinburgh; for he introduced me to a' his grand freends. To be sure, I made my best boo; but ye ken weel I am no like Jamie."

"Weel, ye needna be. The warld maun hae pleughmen as weel as scholars," said his wife.

"Ye are right there. Jamie would hae dune wrang if he hadna treated Davie wi' respect," said Belle.

"Some folk might think his wife is a bit proud, but she didna shaw her pride to me. She is right fond o' Jamie, I could see that, and she would treat me weel for his sake," said Davie.

Thus in conversation pertaining to family affairs the evening passed. Annie had finished her letter, and the time for prayers drew nigh. Davie, on whom this duty then devolved, read and prayed; but his voice was unsteady, and all knew that his heart was too full for a lengthy prayer. They remained on their knees for many moments, each heart silently beseeching the Heavenly Father to give needed grace and strength. As they arose a slight movement attracted their attention towards the aged man. A single gasp, and all was over. Honest Wullie had yielded up his spirit to his Maker.

"He is awa," said the mother.

"Ay, he is gone," said Davie.

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There was no violent outburst of grief. Even sadness was, for the time, almost chased away by the near approach of heaven. Only the solemnity that followed the passing of the death-angel pervaded the cottage.

CHAPTER XX. ANOTHER SHEAF GATHERED.

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The heather had bloomed but seven years on the grave of honest Wullie when the children were again assembled around the bed of death: their aged mother was about to leave them. Jamie had been summoned from Edinburgh, and he with the others silently awaited the inevitable parting.

In looking into the room where the sick mother lay one would notice few changes. The invalid lay just where her husband had lain. The same small stand stood beside the bed; over the sufferer were bending the same forms, or nearly the same, for some changes were noticeable in them. Time had left traces on the once smooth brows of youth, and lines of silver had crept alike into dark or auburn hair. Jamie, already past fifty, was still in his prime. His long residence in the capital had polished his manners, and he appeared the refined cultured gentleman that he was. His fine intellectual brow was furrowed by thought rather than by years. Isabel and Annie had passed the meridian of life, and their afternoon was crowded with duties, and sometimes shadowed by disappointments. They had reached that time when the parental heart knows scarcely more of hope than of fear; when the children, eager to begin the battle of life, rush out into the world, or, staying, are as likely to be vexed as pleased with home restraints. Davie was less changed in appearance than the others. His step, never light nor swift, was neither heavier nor slower than formerly; his broad shoulders showed no inclination to stoop; no shade of disappointment rested on his face; he had merely grown seven years older. Davie's wife moved quietly about, mindful of the comfort of all. Her sensible face, overcast with sadness, gave evidence that she felt the approaching separation no less than the sons and daughters: for this family was one of the few in which mother-in-law and daughter-in-law lived in harmony and succeeded in pleasing each other. Now this beautiful relationship and companionship was to be dissolved. Jeannie had ever been most careful of the comfort of the aged woman, and now in the last sad days her hand most tenderly ministered to her wants.

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But the time came when no human hand could help, when life was fast ebbing, and the shadow of death darkened the household and filled every heart with solemn sadness. For several hours the dying woman had lain in a stupor, and no one expected her to speak again; but she opened her eyes, recovered consciousness, and, seeing the sorrowful faces around her, she spoke.

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"Dinna grieve that I maun leave you. I hae stayed with you till ye can a' care for yoursels better than I can care for you: ye s'ould ask nae mair. Ye are aye in the hands of God; and he will guide you safely through this warld, and bring you to me in the better warld above. I shall greet my bairns on the other shore."

These were her last words. She fell asleep, and waked no more.

They buried her beside her husband and returned to their homes, feeling, as never before, that one generation had passed away and that theirs was the next to follow.

There is, perhaps, no relation in life the dissolution of which sunders so tender a tie as that of child and mother. Memory is so stirred that long-forgotten scenes pass before our mind's eye like a broad panorama. In the foreground stand acts of disobedience and our lack of filial affection, or rather our failure to manifest it as we should have done. Beside these stand the many proofs of maternal love, patience, and self-sacrifice. Happy the children who can recall other and pleasanter memories of their conduct when in the presence of the dead, cold clay of her who has

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done and suffered so much for them! And such was the case in this family. On the evening after their mother's burial the tone of their conversation was not wholly sad and regretful. Each son and daughter knew that the mother had indeed exercised much forbearance towards them all; but there came to them the assurance that they had in many ways, both in early and later years, given proofs of their love and respect. Annie, whose waywardness had perhaps given more trouble than all the rest, sincerely repented her faults, and grieved that she had ever been undutiful to so kind a mother.

"Nane o' the children," said she, speaking to her sister, "hae gien mother the trouble that I hae gien her. Alas, why doesna a bairn ken there is nae pleasure in wrang-doing!"

"O Annie," replied Isabel, "ye needna reproach yoursel; ye werena a troublesome bairn, only a little heidstrang; and I am sure naebody could hae been mair kind or respectful than yoursel these mony years past."

"I ken that," said Annie, "but I canna forget that I grieved her mony times when I kenned weel eneuch I was doing wrang; that isna pleasant to remember."

Jamie, now Professor Murdoch, remained long enough to visit his sisters in their own homes. He spent the evening after the funeral under the roof that had sheltered him in his boyhood; the sisters were there also. After speaking of the dead mother, her virtues, her faith in God, and the eternal happiness with the redeemed upon which she had now entered, the conversation became more general, running in various channels. Jamie had much to ask about the other families, but he took a special interest in Davie's little twin daughters. They looked so much alike that he declared he could not tell which was Maggie and which Nannie. They had large blue eyes and curly flaxen hair. It was their father's delight to sit with one on each knee, trotting them in his clumsy fashion, singing to them the rhymes that were sung to all babies, turning his face from side to side meantime, and gazing fondly at one or the other.

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"Well, Davie, you look about as proud and pleased as a parent can be," remarked Jamie.

"Why should I no look proud? I will leave it to yoursel, Jamie; saw ye ever bonnier bit lassies?"

Jamie smiled good-naturedly. "I think not," he replied.

"Davie," interposed Jeannie, "ye are aye praisin' the bairns. Dinna be makin' ither folk praise them too. Do ye no ken that all parents see their bairns in the same way? Jamie has bairns o' his ain."

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"Ay," replied Davie, "but Jamie has nae lassies in his family."

"No, I have no lassies, and my sons are as tall as I am; so I quite enjoy the novelty of seeing your wee daughters." Then, addressing his sisters, he continued, "I must see more of my nephews and nieces before I return. Some of them I saw only at the funeral, and I hardly recognized them, so much have they grown."

"Dear knows," said Annie, "my bairns do naething but grow. Jennie is half a heid taller than I am, and Robin is as tall as she is. The wee lad, my seven-year auld Donald, is weel grown for his years."

"Let me see—how many bairns have we among us?" asked Jamie.

"A'thegither," said Davie, "we have fourteen: yoursel twa, Belle four, Annie three, and mysel five."

"We dinna number very many," said Isabel, "but for a' that I hae my hands full; and they will be mair than full when Alice gaes awa, for she is to be married at Hallowmas, and it will be a lang time before wee Annie grows strang eneuch to be ony help. And what wi' Sandy's notions about books and Robert's notions about waterwheels and mills, I needna look for muckle help frae them."

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"Sandy must soon come to me, sister Belle," said Jamie.

"Has the lad been talking to you about going to school?"

Jamie was about to reply when the door opened, and Sandy, who had come to accompany his mother home, walked in. As he entered his mother looked at him half-threateningly, half-playfully, and shook her finger at him. He darted an inquiring look at his uncle, and the latter shook his head almost imperceptibly.

"I understand it all," said Isabel, who had been watching the two. "Sandy will leave home too, perhaps close upon the heels of Alice. Well, it is often sae. I think sometimes, What do parents rear bairns for? They arena mair than grown before the flittin' begins."

"It is aye so," said Annie; "leastways in some families. There is my Robin; he takes a deal too muckle interest in information about America. I fear he will take it into his heid to gang there before mony years."

Davie with a startled look glanced towards his sons, who had been listening to all that had been said, as if he feared they might become infected with a desire to leave home too. But Wullie, already sixteen years old, was a home-loving lad; no fear for him. Jamie had always said, "I want to be a shepherd-lad, and rove amang green fields." The third son was a namesake of Archie Lindsay, with whom he was a great favorite, and he had said, "I will work for Uncle Archie when

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I'm a man." Davie recalled all this, and his fears subsided.

Soon Belle and Sandy arose to go home. Annie was to remain to break the lonely feeling of the household from which a dear one had just been carried.

Jamie and Annie talked a little longer with Davie and his wife, and then the little cottage was darkened and all within sought rest and sleep.

CHAPTER XXI. THE PROFESSOR VISITS HIS SISTERS.

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The next morning was bright and sunny, and at an early hour Donald McPherson came to take his wife home. Jamie was to accompany her. The ride in the fresh morning air was delightful as Donald's stout farm-horses plodded easily along over the two miles that lay between the homes of the brother and sister. The conversation ran mostly on farm-work, for that was Donald's province; beyond that his knowledge was limited. The few neighbors that they met or passed raised their bonnets, for all had a profound respect for the man who had risen from their ranks to become a professor in a college. Some of the more inquisitive detained them to ask questions.

An interesting picture presented itself when they reached Annie's door. Douce Donald, leaning on his staff, stood at the gate to welcome them. His form was bowed with many years, but his face was pleasant and his greeting cordial. Behind him stood his grandson and constant companion, wee Donald, or Donald the third. In the door was Jennie, smiling, and looking a very picture of healthy and blooming girlhood. Robin left his hoe in the garden and hastened to welcome Uncle Jamie. Only the aged Katy McPherson remained within, and she was not less pleased than the rest.

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Everything in and about the house gave evidence of thrift. The McPhersons had long since outgrown every look of poverty. Not only was there no lack of articles essential to comfort, but tokens of taste were not entirely wanting, for Jennie's nimble fingers fashioned and arranged many little things, which, though costing but a trifle, beautified the home and rendered it more cheerful and attractive.

After Jamie had conversed some time with the others he took a seat near Katy, whose hearing was "no vera gude," as she said, and entered into conversation with her. She spoke of his excellent mother and of honest Wullie, and her words fell not on indifferent ears.

"The world has few men like your faither, Mr. Murdoch. Though he is dead and gane, the gude he has dune hasna gane wi' him. Ye may be a wiser man than he was, but ye canna be a better ane," said Katy, speaking with earnestness.

"You are right," said Jamie slowly and with evident emotion.

"I maun say," continued Katy, "that I hae great reason to be thankful that his influence was ever felt in my family."

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Jamie, sad from his recent loss, replied with much feeling, "I see more and more clearly, as I grow older, that the good one does lives after him. My step-father was but a simple cottager, and yet I hear him spoken of almost with reverence. Goodness is better than greatness, and the memory of the just does not perish. We think of our friends, dead or living, and we find that nothing draws our affections towards them like sterling worth; wealth or beauty, wit or wisdom, cannot give permanence to our esteem for them."

"Ye are right, Mr. Murdoch. I hae had sic thoughts mysel, but I couldna hae worded them as weel as yoursel did."

Donald the first, or douce Donald, followed by Donald the third, now joined them. They had been with the lad's father and a neighbor to the stable, where the latter was negotiating for a fine young horse. Douce Donald could not think of letting the colt be sold without having something to say in regard to his merits. He was sure, he said, that his son would forget to tell "how strong o' limb the beastie was, how high he carried his heid, and how canny he was in the harness." The bargain had been satisfactorily concluded before he returned to the house.

Jamie soon perceived that the aged man had lost none of his ancient garrulity. He gave the history of several men who had played with Jamie when they were lads together; he asked questions about the improvements and inventions of the day; and could not sufficiently admire the railroad and the telegraph.

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"The world has grawn too wonderful for auld Donald McPherson," he said meditatively, shaking his head. "While the world is changing men canna stand still. I'm muckle changed mysel frae the Donald I once was, and I owe the gude that is in me to your faither. I could a'maist as soon forget my ain name as to forget honest Wullie. I hae him as plainly before me as though he died but yesterday, and it is seven years ago. There will be mair o' us gane soon, or auld age will no hae dune its wark. God grant that when the angel o' death puts in the sickle we may a' be as ripe for the heavenly garner as your gude faither was."

He sighed and remained silent a few moments; then, regaining the buoyancy of spirits that was natural to him, he led his little grandson to his uncle, saying,

"What think ye o' this bairn? Is he na a fine lad?"

James Murdoch extended his hand and drew his nephew to his side. He told him stories of his own sons when they were small. "They are in school and at their books by this time; but no doubt they have had a long tramp before the school hour came."

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"Robert and William are very unlike in some respects," he said, addressing his conversation to Annie, "but in one thing they do not differ: they love to seek out all the historical places in and around Edinburgh. They know more about the old castles and fortresses than I do myself. I do not know what they will accomplish in the world, but they are bright, active lads now."

The dinner hour arrived. There was no hurrying through this meal, for Uncle James had much to say to all, but particularly to Robin, whom he found intelligent, considering his opportunities. Jennie seemed to her uncle her mother's second self. She was staid enough then; but in her black eyes the vivacity of her nature could not wholly be concealed.

The dinner being over, Robin harnessed a horse and took his uncle to Archie Lindsay's, where he was to spend the afternoon. Robin chatted all the way, glad of an opportunity to satisfy his inquiring mind. The drift of his questions was towards America. "I would like to live in that country," said he.

"Why is that?" asked his uncle. "Is not Scotland a bonny country?"

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"Scotland is well enough—leastways it is bonny enough; but I would like to live where one man is as gude as another; where one can buy land and settle as he pleases. Awa wi' the landlords! Mony of them are all right, but some of them are bad enough; and it often happens that an honest man maun work for a scoundrel, and maun dance to his piping whether he pipes right or wrang."

"Robin," said his uncle, "are you not indulging in unprofitable thoughts? Scotland rears many eminent men. Surely her sons have a chance to become both good and great. Emulate those who have become so, and do not vex yourself with that which is beyond your control. You certainly have nothing to complain of."

"No, I havena; but I see them that have. I see the poor far down, and there is nae way to help them up."

"You take a one-sided view of the matter. Do you suppose there are no poor in America?"

"Na, I dinna suppose that; but if they are puir, there is naeboddy to lord it over them. Uncle Jamie, ye mind auld Sawny McKay? Well, he is dead, but the auld wife lives. She is weak and seck, and she had a notion for some broth. Geordie, her youngest lad, took a hare frae the wood to mak a sup for his auld mither. Somebody told o' it, and a muckle ado was made about it, and the lad had to pay a heavy fine that was hard upon him, for he has but sma' wages. Noo, I dinna say it was right in Geordie—maybe it wasna—but I like him a' the better for it. He is a right gude lad, and he never would hae dune it for himsel; he tauld me sae. Weel, I was that angry I said, 'Geordie, let us gang to the United States of America. There ye may tak not only hares, but better game.' Ye s'ould hae seen the light glint in his eye! But it went frae them in a moment. 'Na, I canna; I wanna leave my mither,' said he."

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Robin paused, expecting his uncle to approve of the indignation he had felt. But James Murdoch said nothing. Taking from his pocket a sovereign he put it into Robin's hand.

"Give this to Mistress McKay," said he. "I remember her well. She has patted my head many a time."

By this time they had reached Archie Lindsay's. Uncle and nephew shook hands at parting.

"I hope you will soon lose your discontent, Robin, and convince yourself that Scotland is still a land good enough for all her sons."

"No, Uncle Jamie, my heart is set on America; and it will not be many years before I will put the sea between me and Scotland."

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At the home of the Lindsays, no less than at Donald McPherson's, was James Murdoch a welcome and honored guest. Since his arrival his time and attention had been so much occupied with his mother's sufferings and death, and afterwards with the preparation for the funeral, that he had spent very little time with Belle, although she lived so near. But on this afternoon he had come for a visit. Isabel met him at the door and showed him into the cool, pleasant best-room. Sandy and Robert had been excused from performing any labor in the field that they might be with their uncle. Alice laid aside her work, although so much had to be accomplished before Hallowmas, and entertained her uncle in a manner so easy and womanly that he was greatly pleased with her. Only little Annie was missing. During occasional intervals in the conversation low tones were heard in an adjoining room.

"It is wee Annie," said Alice, observing that her uncle listened. "She aye reads to her grandmither till she falls asleep. Puir lass, I think she will find it hard to bide her time the day."

Presently the sound ceased, and a fair, slight child entered, softly closing the door behind her, thus indicating that the aged woman slept, and no longer needed her services. She approached

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her uncle and offered her hand. He took it, and stooping, kissed the gentle little one, wishing in his heart that he had just such a sweet flower to brighten and gladden his own home.

As the afternoon drew near its close, Belle invited her brother to go and see the aged couple in the other part of the house. Mrs. Lindsay was feeble, and evidently near the end of her pilgrimage. Though younger than her husband, she was more infirm. Mr. Lindsay, now very aged, was in good health; but he was like the sere, brown leaf in autumn, ready to fall at the wind's first blast. He was glad to see James Murdoch. He spoke of many things that had occurred in the distant past, and mentioned with kindest feelings the friends and acquaintances of his early manhood. He spoke of Mrs. Murdoch's death, and cast a significant glance towards the room where his wife lay.

"She will soon be awa too," he said, "and I maun follow at no distant day. Weel, that is the way in this warld; in the ither warld there will be nae mair removes. We shall meet and ken our freends there, Jamie. Do ye think our freends will be the first to greet us on the ither shore?"

"Perhaps so," said Jamie, speaking guardedly.

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"Maybe it is a queer fancy, but I hae been thinking aboot your mither: how when she came to that blest land we read of she would, perhaps, feel strange; and then she might see Wullie beckoning to her; and she would gang to him, and he would lead her to the dear Lord he lo'ed sae weel while on earth; and the Lord himsel would put a crown on her head. You see," said he, by way of apology or explanation, "whiles my mind taks to thinking o' sic things now. The warld isna lang for me, and yet it is pleasant to my auld een. The spring is bonny, and simmer-time is bonnier still; but autumn minds me o' auld age, and hard by are the frosts o' winter and death. Your faither had no fear o' death. I hae had mony a talk wi' him, and they hae dune me gude. Lang may Scotland hae sic men reared amang her sons o' toil, for even there they hae an influence that maun be felt."

Jamie went to Mrs. Lindsay's bedside to speak to her.

"I am right glad to see ye ance mair, Jamie. Sit ye doun, and speak a wee to your auld freend."

But Jamie could say but little: the scene recalled his mother's sick-bed. Mrs. Lindsay understood his feelings.

"Ay, your mither is awa," said she, "and I am gaen soon. This life maun come to an end wi' us a'. Nae doot it is weel wi' your mither; and I trust in the mercy o' God, through Jesus Christ, that it will be weel wi' me. It was honest Wullie wha helped me to lose the fear o' death. He often spoke to the gude-man and mysel o' spiritual things."

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The next day, as James Murdoch was speeding on towards his own home, many thoughts filled his mind, but uppermost was this one: "Will my life be as fruitful in good works as my step-father's was? After all of me that is mortal has turned to dust, will any say of me as they say of him, 'He helped me on in the way to heaven?'"

CHAPTER XXII. CHANGES.

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There were hurried footsteps and coming and going one rainy night at the home of the Lindsays. It was not the evening of Alice's marriage, for Hallowmas was long past, and Alice was far away. There had been a quiet wedding, for all had thought merriment out of place in a house so soon to become a house of mourning. The grandmother was feeble still, and would be so until the mortal should put on immortality; but it was the grandfather about whom all were anxious on that gloomy night. He had been seized with sudden illness, and lay speechless and unconscious. Not one of the household had retired to rest. Davie and Jeannie were there. Robert had gone for the doctor, and all were anxiously waiting for his arrival.

"It is a lang way," said Davie, "and the roads are heavy wi' the rain. Ye maun hae patience."

But it was not easy to be patient. Again and again did one and another look out into the darkness and listen, but heard only the fast-falling rain.

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"If only Sandy had been here to go," said Belle. "Robert is but a young lad to be out this dark night."

But Sandy was in Edinburgh.

"Robert will do as weel as onybody," said Davie. "I might hae gane mysel, if had kenned ye would be worried about the lad; but hae nae fears for Robert; he'll come hame safe and sound."

Archie Lindsay sat by his father's bedside. Margaret, his sister, was constantly passing from one sick-room to the other. Mrs. Lindsay suspected that something had happened to her husband. "What is wrang wi' your faither?" she asked.

Margaret vainly endeavored to quiet her apprehensions.

"Ye needna say your faither isna muckle seck, Maggie. What else would keep ye a' out o' your

beds? I maun see him for mysel."

Finding that she could not be quieted, her two children carried her to her husband's bedside. She gazed on the face to which the light of reason would never more return.

"Wae is me! Wae is me!" she exclaimed. "He is gaen, and gaen as his faither did before him. Oh, that I, wha hae been sae long on the brink o' the grave, s'ould live to see him taen awa!" [Pg 157]

Her children persuaded her to return to her own room, promising to inform her if any change should take place.

The doctor came, but his remedies were of no avail. Mr. Lindsay passed away at dawn.

Margaret, true to her promise, communicated the sad intelligence to her mother as soon as she awoke.

Mrs. Lindsay spoke not a word. She raised her eyes and stretched her hands upward; then the hands fell and the eyes closed; her heart had ceased to beat.

Margaret Lindsay had been a most dutiful daughter. As long as her parents lived she had devoted herself to their care and comfort. Now that they were gone, she became a member of her brother's family.

Little Annie shared her aunt's room, for the child had been very lonely since Alice went away. She sometimes relieved the hours of their tediousness by going to her uncle Davie's to play with the twins. Many an hour did she amuse both herself and them, much to the satisfaction of her aunt Jeannie, whose duties were neither few nor light.

Annie was fond of books and study, like her brother Sandy. Since he had been in Edinburgh he had written to his little sister, telling her how much he desired her to study, and how pleasant it was to read and gain knowledge. Very proud was she when she had written a letter to him in a neat, legible hand. "Alexander looks nicer than Sandy," she said, looking at the address, "but I like the sound of Sandy better." [Pg 158]

While Alexander was in Edinburgh, studying under his uncle's direction, Robert Lindsay was fast attaining a man's stature. He had no taste for farm-work, but he liked to handle tools, and was never tired of machinery.

"He'll no make a farmer, that is plain to be seen," said his father, "and he might as well do what he likes best."

But his mother, loath to spare another child from home, managed to hold the matter in check for a short time. Finally he became so restless that his parents consented to let him go to Glasgow, where his sister Alice lived, that he might gratify his inclination in some of the many mills and machine-shops of that busy city.

The house seemed lonely when he was gone; and well it might, for in no very long time five had left the home circle. So dull was it that Isabel prevailed on Davie to let his son Jamie, who had for some time been employed on the farm, live with her altogether, so that the evenings might not seem quite so long. Annie did not at first like him in Robert's place, for he teased her slyly in many ways. If she laid down her knitting he would manage to tangle the yarn or draw out some of the needles. He misplaced her bookmarks, and pretended to rub out her sums. But that was only his way of noticing her, for, after all, he loved to please her, and he brought her all the queer or pretty things he found in the woods or fields. She reproved him one day when he brought her some bird's eggs. [Pg 159]

"O Jamie!" she exclaimed, "how could you do sic a thing? You hae robbed a bird's nest."

"Nae, I didna," he replied. "The auld bird is dead. A sportsman maun hae shot her. I kenned long ago where the nest was, and the mother-bird hasna been there these mony days. Nae, I wouldna rob a bird's nest even for you, Annie."

The twins often came to see Annie as soon as they were old enough, and they were always welcome at Aunt Belle's. They bid fair to have the good sense of their parents, with more beauty. Davie was never too busy to stop and speak to his little daughters as they passed him at his work.

Archie had grown to be a big boy, and was a great help to his mother. But he had a great aversion to in-door work, and he longed for the day when Maggie and Nannie should take his place, and he work in the fields like other lads. [Pg 160]

Time soon granted the boy's wish. Davie Murdoch had no more bairns to trot upon his knee; and Jeannie was heard to remark, "It taks mair cloth to mak gowns for baith lassies than to mak ane for mysel."

CHAPTER XXIII. ROBIN IN AMERICA.

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While these changes were taking place in the other families, Annie McPherson's children were

not standing still. Thomas MacDuff had long sought the hand of Jennie, but she had kept him alternating between hope and fear. "He is nae better than ither folk," said she, "if he is a minister's son. If I wanted a sweetheart I could find mony a laddie as good as himsel any day in the week."

"She is a chip of the old block," said Donald to his wife.

But finally she concluded that he was better than other laddies, and consented to become his wife. The light-hearted, fun-loving McPhersons had a merry wedding. Jokes and laughter were not wanting on that day, and these were not frowned upon even by the good minister, the bridegroom's father. "The Bible tells us there is a time to be merry," said he, "and what time is more fitting than a wedding-day?"

Thomas MacDuff taught a village school in a neighboring town, and thither he took his wife.

Robin still remained at home, but every passing year had added strength to his desire to go to America. He read of its boundless extent, its fertile soil, its sources of wealth, and the facility with which a home and competence could be acquired, and nothing would satisfy him but to go there. Scotland was well enough for those who wished to live and die in the same cottage, he said; but he wanted a better chance.

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His parents looked with disapprobation on his plans and wishes, but he could not be turned from his purpose.

"I will make a man that you will not be ashamed of," said he. "Some day you will think I hae as muckle sense as ither folk."

Dame McKay having been laid in her last resting-place, her son was free to carry into effect his long-cherished desire to emigrate to America. He and Robin would go together. He had saved enough money to pay his passage. Robin also had some money; and when his father became convinced that nothing could keep him at home, he generously supplied him with as much more as he needed to pay his passage and defray his expenses until he should earn a support in the new country, or bring him back to Scotland if his anticipations should not be realized.

As the time for departure drew near, serious faces and sad hearts were in the home of the McPhersons. Robin tried to dissipate their sadness.

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"Ye needna wear sic lang faces," said he. "America is nae longer thought to be the end o' the earth. Wha kens but I may graw rich there, and come back and mak a' the lairds lift their bonnets to me?"

"Oh, my puir bairn," said his mother, "mair likely ye willna ken what a hame is in that farawa land. Ye will be gaen aboot frae place to place, and naebody will think o' your comfort."

"Hoot, mither! As for a hame, I will get ane for mysel, and a Yankee wife will think of my comfort."

But when the tender-hearted Robin came to say adieu to father, mother, brother, and sister, it was all he could do to control his feelings. And there were his aged grandparents whom he could not expect to see again; he must say to them a last good-by. He thought it would be easier to speak his farewells hurriedly and hasten away. But they detained him to give their last words of counsel. Douce Donald looked very grave. Taking the young man's hand, he said,

"Robin, I hae been young, and I am noo auld. I hae learned mony things by experience, sae hear a ward frae your grandfaither. Dinna sow any wild oats; ye wanna want to reap them. Dinna meddle wi' the wine-cup; it will bring ye doun below the beasties that perish. Never gang at sic a gait as I hae dune in my younger days, for ye may never rin against ony honest Wullie wha will help ye back to the right way. God bless thee, Robin! May he keep thy foot frae falling and thine ee frae tears!"

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The grandmother then approached, her strong face quivering with emotion.

"Your grandfaither has said what was in my mind to say. I will add only one thing. Pray to the great and gude Father that he will guide your feet in wisdom's ways, which are ways of pleasantness, and in her paths, which are paths of peace. Then shall we meet in that bonny warld, the shores o' which your grandparents are now nearing. Fare ye weel."

Robin was quite overcome; he could hardly trust his voice to reply. He stepped quickly from the door, said a last good-by, and drove away, not venturing to look back.

Separation from friends is often less felt by those who go out into the world than by those who remain at home. It was so in this case. Robin met Geordie McKay, as had been arranged, and the two young men set out together. Their minds were diverted by new scenes and bright anticipations; but it was not so at home. Annie McPherson gathered up every article that had been her son's, and laid them all away with tender touches, as if handling the relics of the dead. Many a sigh escaped her motherly bosom, and the very things he had often left in her way, and on account of which she had found fault with him, were now gently lifted, and invested almost with sacredness. All missed him as well as the mother. The father was unusually busy in order to divert his mind; the grandfather took his cane and walked far beyond the out-buildings—a thing he had not done for many a day; the grandmother lay down for her accustomed nap, but soon returned unrefreshed to her chair. "I canna sleep the day," she said. When evening came and all

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the household gathered around the hearth, Robin was their theme, and day after day the missing link of the family chain was held in remembrance and mentioned with tenderness.

When, however, there came a letter stating that he had arrived safely in New York, they felt relieved and comforted. He had written that he should start immediately for the broad West, to secure a home amid its fertile lands. And when he wrote that he and Geordie had each taken a homestead for almost nothing, and were living alone in a little log-cabin, and reported how easily they turned the soil, that there were no stones, that the climate was delightful, and that abundance of game could be had for the taking—those left at home began to think better of the venture. "Maybe," said they, "it wasna a fulish notion after a'."

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Robin had indeed, in good earnest, set about making a home; but the second part of his vaunt, a wife to keep it, seemed less likely to be accomplished.

"Lassies are but few here," said Geordie. "I doot if ye find ane to suit your notion for a lang while, Robin."

"I wouldna want ane to come to this place just now," replied Robin. "I must first get my farm in good condition, and save my siller and build a house; then I would have a better chance wi' the lassies."

Geordie McKay was no whit behind Robin in industry and thrift. Both worked early and late. In a few years they had well-cultivated farms, horses and cattle, and each a very good house. Having prepared their cages, they were not long in finding birds to occupy them. A neighboring farmer who had two grown daughters soon became father-in-law to the two thrifty Scotchmen. Thus in the midst of abundance such as they had never seen in the old world did these two young men pass their days in cheerful labor, looking forward to the possibilities of the future, and glad that they had left a narrow world, too old to change its ways. Many a time, when venison, prairie-chicken, or a rabbit steamed on their well-supplied tables, did the circumstance of the stolen hare present itself to their memory, and Geordie thought of his pale, pinched mother, whose wants could not always be supplied.

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Often did they talk of home, of bonny Scotland, and the friends they left behind them. Robin dearly loved his kindred across the water; and when he received tidings of the death of his grandfather, and afterwards of his grandmother, he sighed that he should have no more kindly messages from these aged relatives. He often wondered what his parents would say if they could see the great country in which he had chosen a home.

In his letters he pictured his surroundings in glowing colors. These letters were eagerly read and their contents told over. They fell on the ears of one more interested than the others, and that one was Davie Murdoch's Jamie. He knew that his parents would not care to have him feel any special interest in that subject, so he concealed his thoughts for a time, but they were like a smouldering fire in his bosom.

CHAPTER XXIV. OVER LAND AND SEA.

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Four years after Robert Lindsay left home he returned for a visit. He was now a millwright. He had not only mastered his trade, but he had surprised his employers by his originality and inventive genius. Satisfied with what he had accomplished, he thought himself entitled to a holiday. There was joy in the old farmhouse when Robert arrived. After all the others had greeted him Annie came forward, put her arms about his neck, and kissed him.

"Now that is what I call a bit partial," said her cousin James, her warm friend and her unceasing tormentor. "Here I hae been gaen in and out o' this house for three years and mair, and Annie has never gien me a kiss."

"Ye will gang in and out three years mair and I winna do it," said she, laughing, while a blush mantled her cheek at Jamie's unexpected complaint.

"Na, Annie, I willna be here three years mair, kiss or no kiss. I will be awa to Robin in America."

"Ye are joking now," said Aunt Belle.

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"Not a bit of it. There is nae need o' three strang lads hanging about one small hame. Wullie does the ploughing, Archie can take my place, and I can very well be spared. Ye should hear, Robert, how Robin writes about that country."

"Now, dinna put it into his heid next," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"If there is gude fortune to be had for the taking, I might as weel hae it as ither people," said Robert, casting a wistful glance at the supper table. Travelling had made him hungry, and a whiff from one of the steaming dishes sharpened his appetite.

The mother announced supper, and all gathered at the table. Robert was the hero of the evening: he talked while others listened. He told them how pleasantly Alice was situated, and spoke well of her husband.

"Alice deserves to do weel," said the mother. "She was aye a dutiful daughter, and I mak no doubt she is a gude wife as weel."

Robert's holidays passed so quickly that when they were gone all wished he had but just come.

"I am not done thinking about America," said he, as he was about to leave. "Here I may work for ither people all the days of my life; there I might build a mill, and own it myself in the bargain. If Jamie Murdoch goes he will not go alone." [Pg 170]

Davie Murdoch soon became aware that his son was making plans to leave home and kindred and follow Robin to America. He was heavy-hearted, for he knew that Jamie would sooner or later accomplish what he had made up his mind to do.

"It has a' come o' Robin's roving notions," said he to his wife. "Hoo can I let Jamie gang? He is the cleverest lad I hae; and he is o'er young to gang that far."

"I would be muckle grieved to part wi' him," said Jeannie, "but I canna blame the lad. What would he do here but herd sheep, or haud the pleugh for ither people? while in America he could shear his ain sheep, and guide his ain pleugh on his ain land. If I was young I would gang mysel."

"Hoot, woman!" said Davie, "dinna let the lad hear ye talk in that fashion. I am glad I hae nae sic notions. I am content to live and dee as my faither did before me. If I am as muckle respeckit as he was, I shall hae honor eneuch, and I am sure we dinna suffer for ony o' the necessaries o' life."

"That is true, Davie, but young people canna be content wi' auld ways. If our sons could do better for themselves than we can do for them, I wouldna haud them back." [Pg 171]

Davie heaved a sigh, put on his bonnet, and went out to his accustomed toil.

The subject of America was never long undiscussed in the little cottage circle. Every time Jamie came home he was sure to introduce it.

"Do ye not fare weel eneuch wi' Archie Lindsay?" asked his father.

"Ay, I fare weel eneuch," said Jamie, "but I can never make a step forward. Nothing but America will satisfy me. I am twa-and-twenty years of age, and I can make my way now if ever I can. Wages are good there—twa or three dollars a day in harvest, Robin says—and I could soon earn enough to buy a farm, and stock it too. There is but ane thing would keep me at hame, and that is if ye should say, 'Ye shallna gang.' In that case I think I would grieve mair than you would to let me hae my way."

"Ye will leave us wi' sair hearts if ye gang, Jamie," said his mother, "but I wouldna want a mither's feelings to stand in the way o' your success. If ye maun gang, ye hae my consent and my blessing," said she, wiping her eyes with her apron as she spoke.

Jamie caught the first shadow of consent, and resolved to go the following spring. Before that time his cousin, Robert Lindsay, the millwright, had decided to go with him. The young emigrants wrote to Robin that they were coming, and gained the necessary information in regard to the journey. [Pg 172]

With dim eyes and trembling fingers Davie Murdoch counted from his little hoard a sum which, added to his son's earnings, made the amount sufficient to defray the expenses of the journey. "And take this besides," said he as, parent-like, he laid five pounds more on the pile. "Seckness may overtake you, my bairn."

On the day appointed for the departure Archie Lindsay, who was to take Jamie as well as his own son to a railway station, came to Davie's cottage, accompanied by his wife and daughter; they had come to take leave of Jamie. They had become much attached to him in the three years he had lived under their roof.

There were no dry eyes in the cottage that morning. Davie took his son's hand, held it some moments, shook his head sadly, then turned away; he could say nothing. The mother could scarcely do more. She spoke a few words of counsel; then her voice was choked with sobs. The sisters were in tears, and Jamie's own eyes began to fill. He kissed his mother, his sisters, and his aunt Belle. When he came to Annie she proffered a kiss likewise. [Pg 173]

"Weel, I hae gained this muckle, at ony rate, by gaen awa. A kiss frae Annie is a thing to remember," said he, trying to make light of his sadness.

Time and railroad trains do not wait, and the two young men with Mr. Lindsay drove rapidly away. Davie and his remaining sons went to their work—one to follow the plough, the other to tend the sheep on the hillside.

In less than two weeks our travellers had landed in New York, purchased tickets for the West, and were speeding towards the setting sun as fast as steam could carry them. Across the Alleghanies, across rivers in comparison with which those of Scotland were mere brooks, across States as large as kingdoms, through flourishing towns and busy cities, over far-reaching, level prairies, they hurried forward day and night, till they reached the Father of Waters, and crossed it. Still westward pursuing their course a day's journey, they reached at last their destination.

If the parting with home and friends was sad, the meeting with their cousin in America was very joyful. Robin, with a fine pair of horses, was at the station awaiting their arrival. Taking them and

their trunks into his wagon, he drove away across the level prairie towards his own home. To the new-comers the country seemed a paradise. Far as their sight could reach a vast expanse of living green met their delighted eyes. Fields of waving grain, miles in extent, gave varied tints to the verdant landscape. Herds of sleek-haired cattle grazed on the unfenced fields of luxuriant prairie-grass. All around them flowers of scarlet, purple, gold, pure white, and delicate intermediate tints dotted the green enamel, glowed in the sunlight, nodded a welcome, or bowed their graceful stems in the breeze that undulated the ocean of green. Never had they conceived that earth in her primeval garb was so magnificent. Beyond answering a few simple questions about the friends at home, they could talk and think of nothing but the beauties of nature spread out before them. Many miles they rode across this varying and yet uniform garden; and when at length they reached the homestead a warm Western welcome awaited them.

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"It is a braw hame ye hae," said Jamie, "and I am muckle pleased wi' all I see. But how is it that ye dinna speak your ain language? Hae ye grawn ashamed of your mither-tongue? Naebody would ken ye were a Scotchman at a'."

"No, I am not ashamed of it," said Robin, with a smile; "but it wears away after a while, where no one speaks that way. You will lose your Scotch too, Jamie; but it has done me good to hear you talk. It seems like a bit of Scotland, and I like you better for it."

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Geordie McKay was not slow to visit and welcome his fellow-countrymen. He, too, thought of his old home across the waves, and his heart warmed towards it as he heard the familiar speech of his boyhood.

The new-comers went to work with a will, and at the end of three years James Murdoch had a farm of his own. He had bought improved land near his cousin Robin's. Robert Lindsay had built or helped to build two mills, and then he had gone to a fine wheat-producing region, where he was building a mill for himself.

When Jamie had the deed of his farm in his hands he went to spend the evening at Robin's. "I have made the last payment to-day," said he. "I own a hundred and sixty acres of land, and I am a happy man."

"That is more than you would ever have called your own in the old country," said Robin.

"You are right in that. I have succeeded even beyond my expectation; nevertheless I long for a sight of the faces I left in the far-away cottage."

"And do you not think I too have such a longing?"

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"I suppose you have; but you have a wife and bairns. You can scarcely miss the old friends as I do."

"You must take a wife too, Jamie."

"If I could find a lass as good and as bonny as my cousin Annie, I might try to win her hand."

"Cousin Annie—ay, she was but young when I left the old country; but I mind she was fair to look at, and a pleasant child too. I wonder how they all look there now."

Jamie was not very long in finding a lass who would have compared not unfavorably with his cousin Annie. She was a cousin of Robin's wife, and the beautiful affection cherished for each other by these two families of cousins could scarcely have been equalled by any two brothers in the land. The grass was not suffered to grow upon the path between their pleasant homes. They loved to meet and talk of their old homes across the waters—of their dead as well as of their living friends. Robin could well remember his grandfather, honest Wullie, but Jamie could recall him only in his last days. He remembered how Alice Lindsay had tried to comfort his brother Wullie and himself when they first knew they were to lose their grandfather. Often, when thinking and talking of such things, they formed plans to go and see their relatives and the dear familiar scenes so far away. The prospect was still in the distance; but when they should become sufficiently prosperous they expected to make the journey.

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CHAPTER XXV.

SUNDAY; THE LAST DAY WITH OUR FRIENDS.

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It was Sunday in the early summer, and Sunday in Scotland means more than it does in some countries. Children go to church with their parents through summer's heat and winter's cold; and in many families the greater portion of the time after service is spent with Bibles or Psalm-books in hand.

Davie Murdoch had been to church with his family. As they returned home he and his wife walked together; Maggie and Nannie were some distance in advance of their parents, and still farther on were Wullie and Archie.

"I canna help feeling a bit proud o' the lassies," said Davie, "they look sae fresh and weel the day. Are they not as bonny and as sonsie as ony parent could wish?"

"Oh, ay, Davie, they are that. But it is strange ye arena thinking o' what the minister said, as is your wont."

"I mind weel what he said, wifie; but I hae been thinking a good deal o' late o' the time not far awa when the lassies will nae longer be ours as they hae been; when we shall walk without them to the kirk, and they will gang anither road, and nae mair ca' the auld cot hame. So I maun enjoy their stay wi' us while I may."

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"They winna gang for some months yet; dinna fash yoursel about that the day. Ye couldna expect them to bide always wi' us. Wullie will soon bring a wife hame; and it is weel that the lassies hae sic gude prospects o' hames o' their ain."

"Ay, it is weel; but they hae always been a bit nearer my heart than the laddies. Jamie comes next; but he is awa. Jamie is doing weel, by what we hear."

"Noo, Davie, I am nae like that. Of course ane feels mair tender o' lassies than o' laddies. Then wi' Jamie bein' awa, I hae times when I feel a bit tenderer for him too; but I couldna wish better sons than Wullie and Archie. And gin onything happened to them, I think ye would find oot they are as dear to your heart as ony o' your bairns."

"Nae doot, nae doot. It is but a notion, after a'. Archie says he willna marry—leastways, while his parents live. He says he wants to be aye free to help us, s'ould there be ony need o' 't. Saw ye ever mair thoughtfulness than that, Jeannie?"

"May the Lord bless him for his dutiful regard for his auld faither and mither!" said Jeannie.

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They had now reached the cottage. The daughters had spread the table, and as soon as all were rested a little they sat down to their frugal meal. Let us look in at the open cottage-door. As Davie doffs his bonnet we can see that time has not passed him by, although it has dealt him no heavy blows. The crown of his head is bald, and his locks are flecked with the frosts of age. His brow is furrowed, but not deeply.

Beside him sits Jeannie, her silver hair peeping from beneath her cap-border. Her cheerful face wears now a seriousness befitting the Sabbath day. She sits as erect as in her prime, save when grace is said; then all heads are bowed. The sons sit on one side of the table and the daughters on the other. Wullie is not remarkable for good looks, unless we take the adjective in its moral sense; then it certainly would apply to him, for his countenance indicates a good and upright character. Archie's form and features are more pleasing than his brother's. He is naturally cheerful and talkative; but every semblance of mirth is now under proper restraint through respect for the day, and he appears as sedate as though he never cracked a joke or teased his sisters in all his life.

Maggie, tall and well formed, is fair, with bluish gray eyes and wavy brown hair. She is less ruddy than her sister, whose red lips and rosy cheeks would give her the advantage in regard to beauty but for the plainly perceptible national mark—high cheek-bones. Otherwise there is a close resemblance between the two. "It is well there is some difference," Archie had remarked, "or your sweethearts would make funny mistakes sometimes."

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Sunday was strictly observed by the Lindsays also; but only one of their children was at home on that day, or indeed on any day; that one was Annie. But the others had not forgotten their early training; and, scattered as they were, and charged with the cares and responsibilities of active life, they had all been in God's house. Alice, happy in her family, and satisfied with the allotments of Providence, is training up her children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Alexander has finished his course of study, and is following his uncle's profession in the capital.

And where is Jennie MacDuff? She too has been at the old church with her husband to hear his aged father expound the Word of God. So Donald McPherson's pew was filled, although his father and mother had ceased to worship here below, and had joined the general assembly and church of the firstborn in heaven. Donald the third was the staff and stay of his parents, being all that they wished him to be.

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Professor James Murdoch, with his wife, his nephew, and his two sons—one a barrister, the other a physician—worshipped in a costly edifice, very unlike the homely stone structure of his early recollections. But not less devout were his feelings, for he remembered all the way the Lord had led him and his kinsfolk, and he bowed in grateful acknowledgment of His goodness.

Across the sea were hearts that longed for a sight of the dear old kirk and of the familiar faces which on that day had turned towards the aged man of God, Rev. John MacDuff. Robin McPherson, Robert Lindsay, and James Murdoch had each joined God's worshippers in the land of their adoption on that Sabbath morning. In the afternoon Robin and James walked out "to meditate in the field at the eventide" and contemplate the goodness of Him who sends seedtime and harvest; and, meeting as if by mutual consent at the fence which separated their little domains, they talked of the day and its observance in Scotland, of their far-away friends, and of a future meeting with them, perhaps in this world; but if not, they hoped to spend with them a never-ending Sabbath.

And here I close my story. In tracing the life of this Scottish peasant I have endeavored to show that a righteous man, even in a humble sphere, exerts an influence for good which remains to bless those who come after him; and that not only is he blessed in his day and generation, but the blessing extends to children's children.

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Effie Patterson's Story.

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BY LYDIA L. ROUSE.

INTRODUCTION.

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This book has been written with a view of helping to perpetuate the memory of those zealous and courageous sons of Scotland who in the seventeenth century, through the long period of fifty years, struggled for their inalienable rights and privileges—their civil and religious liberty. Although every reader of history is more or less familiar with the events which transpired during this struggle, it may be well, for the sake of our younger readers, to give something of an outline of their course, as well as of the causes which led to them.

The persecuted people of Scotland were Presbyterians, having embraced the doctrines of the great reformer John Knox. But they are widely known by the name of Covenanters, because on several distinct occasions they signed a solemn agreement, or covenant, to adhere to their religious principles and to defend them against all opposition. Successive kings endeavored to force them to admit the royal claim to supreme authority in matters of religion and to adopt the Episcopal form of church government and worship; but the Scotch were faithful to their conscience and their Covenant, and the attempted interference with their religion engendered bitter animosity which ripened into open hostility.

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The kings under whose reigns the Covenanters suffered were Charles I., Charles II., and James II.; but as early as the reign of James I. the royal power was unfriendly to Presbyterianism as offering too formidable a check to kingly despotism.

The history of this time, as regards the treatment of the dissenting Scots, is the history of a succession of tyrannies and cruelties that culminated in the reigns of Charles II. and James II. Edicts having failed to accomplish the wish of the king and his advisers, armed men were sent into Scotland to enforce conformity with the sword. Some battles were fought, in which the persecutors were generally victorious.

The dissenting pastors were driven from the parish churches, and Episcopalian ministers, or curates, many of whom were ignorant and vicious, were placed in their pulpits. But the Scots had no mind to hear them, and rather than adopt doctrines and modes of worship which in any degree savored of popery, they followed their spiritual guides into the fields, and there heard the Word of God expounded as they had been wont. These field-meetings, called "conventicles," were contrary to the wishes of the king, and ministrations or attendance at them was prohibited by law, and declared punishable by fine, imprisonment, or exile, and even in some cases death. But the liberty-loving, conscience-obeying Covenanters continued to hold them whenever opportunity offered, sometimes in remote districts, sometimes in almost inaccessible places.

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The Covenanters suffered great loss of property through fines and taxations. Robberies and barbarities almost unparalleled were perpetrated by the Highland hordes that were quartered on the southwestern part of Scotland for three months in the beginning of 1678. Still, however, the brave hearts of the heaven-trusting Covenanters were unbroken and their spirit unsubdued. They were hunted like criminals; but they either evaded their pursuers or met death with composure and willingness, esteeming it preferable to apostasy. They have left us many striking proofs of God's sustaining grace.

Living in dens and caves of the earth, suffering from cold and hunger, cut off from intercourse with their families, and even with their fellow-beings, many of them became zealots, and advocated measures which the more prudent could not approve; and thus dissensions arose in their midst and increased the difficulties of their situation. We can scarcely be surprised at this state of things when we remember their privations, their solitude, and their sufferings; their ideas took color and shape from their surroundings. No wonder that some of them were extremists. The husband and father was no longer soothed by the music of the wife's soft lullaby to the infant resting on her knee, and the constant youth heard only in imagination the sweet sound of the voice he most loved. But their ears were assailed by the ungentle sound of the wintry wind as it roared in the tossing tree-tops or moaned over the dreary moors. With sad hearts they pictured their firesides as they had been in other days, and wondered if they should outlive the storm and again find rest in the peace of home.

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We cannot read of these worthy people, who suffered so much for conscience' sake, without feeling thankful for the religious liberty which their struggles helped to secure for us, and rejoicing that the day of religious persecution is past. And when we consider the vast number that perished rather than barter the favor of God for that of an earthly sovereign, we are filled with admiration as well as sympathy.

CHAPTER I. THE HOME CIRCLE.

Long have I been called by my neighbors "Auld Effie," and yet I am but threescore and seven years old. But I have lived in troublous times, and am older than my years. And although the Kirk of Scotland has had rest these many years, Auld Effie's heart is still sore. My kinsfolk need not now lay down their lives for conscience' sake; but, alas! few of them were left to me when those years of bloodshed were overpast. It is for those dear friends who were cut down in the bloom of youth, in manhood's prime, and even in old age, that I often make moan. And I hold it to be a sacred duty to keep in remembrance our martyred kindred and countrymen. It is with the wish and hope that the tales I have to tell may help to keep before the minds of Scotland's sons and daughters the value of their religious privileges that I have in this the evening of my days taken upon myself the task to write as best I can, with my poor wit, my own experience and the sufferings of my family and friends during those terrible years.

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I was born in 1646 in the county of Ayr; here have I lived, and here, may it please God, I will die. My father, John Patterson, was the schoolmaster in our village. My mother was one Christie Henderson, from Dumfries. Her parents came to our town when she was a grown lass; two years later she wedded my father. I was the youngest bairn born to them. Three sons and a daughter besides myself completed our family. My sister's name was Mary, and my brothers were named James, Richard and Stephen; but to us they were Jamie, Richie, and Steenie.

My father was a man of strictest integrity, firm and stern. Perhaps the habit of ruling his little school made him more stern than he naturally was; at any rate, he seldom smiled, and he never indulged in frivolous conversation. Our noisy play was instantly checked when our father entered the house; not so much from fear as from respect, for my father was a man to command respect. After the lapse of so many years I still think of him as the embodiment of all that is good, true, and noble. But we look at our friends with partial eyes, and I doubt not many have thought as well of their own father.

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My mother was truly a fit companion for him, although she thought him far superior to herself. She had a profound respect for him at all times; almost every important question concerning the management of domestic affairs she brought to him for his opinion or decision. "Use your own judgment, Christie," he would often say; "it will never lead you far astray."

It is surprising what cheerfulness and comfort my mother diffused throughout our household. She was constantly employed; and I may say without exaggeration that, owing to her tact and taste, no family of our means made so decent an appearance in the kirk as did ours. Nothing could be more serene than her own face as with her whole family she sat in the kirk listening to the Word of God as it was read and expounded by our spiritual leader. I could not but steal looks at her sometimes when she thought my eyes were where hers were—on the face of the speaker. She was not what one would call bonnie, but it was a right motherly face she had.

The children were early sent to school, for my father sought to impress our minds with the idea that we were in the world to be useful workers, and not idlers; and to fit us for usefulness he held education to be the chief means. When not in school we were always busy in the house or in the garden, for all the work of the family was done by its own members. Our home was well out of the village; we owned a house and garden, and rented some land forbye, for we aye kept cows and sheep. My mother had been reared in the country. She made butter and cheese; she spun and wove the wool of our flocks into cloth, and made the garments for our family with her own hands until her daughters were old enough to help her. My father worked in the garden; and he early taught his sons to handle the spade and the hoe. All worked from dawn to dark; and when the evening lamp was lighted my father or one of the lads read, while my mother sewed and Mary and I were busy with the family knitting.

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We were kept in school longer than most children were, for my father thought it a shame for any one to be ignorant, and would not be satisfied till all his children could write their mother-tongue as it should be written.

Ours was a well-ordered home, and a happy one, till the troubles of the times brought sorrow into almost all the homes of Scotland.

CHAPTER II. THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS.

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While I was yet young I often heard people talk about the troubles that had beset, and were likely

still to befall, the Kirk of Scotland. As I grew older I comprehended what was meant by the troubles of the kirk, for it was my lot to live through one period of her persecution, and to see her deliverance in the Lord's own good time. Troubles assailed the kirk during the greater part of the long reign of James VI. of Scotland and I. of England. He had no love for Presbyterianism, and endeavored to establish Episcopacy among us; and many a faithful minister bore imprisonment or banishment for the truth and conscience' sake. Charles I. was even more self-willed than his father. He could not endure that we should have a church different from his own, or that the king's will should not rule in all things. In 1637 he ordered a new and popish Service-Book to be used in the Scottish churches instead of the liturgy of John Knox, which had been in use for many years. Our people could not accept it. They humbly petitioned the king that they might be allowed to worship God in their own way; but he paid no heed to their petition, except to strive the more to force Episcopacy upon us.

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Seeing that our religious liberty was threatened, the Scottish people signed a solemn agreement, called "the National Covenant," pledging themselves before God to adhere to the pure doctrine of his Word as confessed by the Scottish Kirk, and to defend it and each other against all attacks. This Covenant was first signed in Grayfriars Kirk and kirkyard in Edinburgh on February 28 of the year 1638.

My father was in the prime of life at the time of the signing of the Covenant. He did not go to Edinburgh with the vast throng that came from far and near to sign it—and folk say that many of them wrote their names with their own blood—but that did not prevent him from putting his name to it, for copies of it were carried through the whole country. Gentle and simple signed it, and he was not slow to set his name with those of so many of his fellow-countrymen. From this time a cloud of war began to form and gather blackness.

When it appeared that the king was resolved to enforce obedience to himself by the sword, our people, convinced of their duty to obey God rather than man, made preparations to insure their liberty of conscience.

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My father's occupation prevented him from enrolling his name as a soldier. But he was no disinterested spectator of his country's troubles. Many were the consultations held under our own roof at the time of the first uprising of the Covenanters; many a "God-speed" did he bid those who went, and many a prayer did he put up for those who should stand in battle.

The first army was soon disbanded, as you will remember; for King Charles, seeing our forces so strong, made concessions to meet the demands of our people, though that these were made in good faith it would be difficult to believe. Peace, indeed, lasted but a short time. The king, displeased with the decision of the General Assembly condemning Episcopacy in Scotland, gathered another army; and again the Covenanters took the field. This time they advanced into England, and their success prepared the way for a treaty with the king, which was concluded in 1641.

Meanwhile the great conflict ending in civil war broke out between Charles and the English Parliament, and gave him something to do nearer home; and the spread of Presbyterianism in England, together with the "Solemn League and Covenant" for its defence and for the protection of the liberties of the kingdoms which the English Parliament and its adherents made with our Scotch nobles and people in 1643, freed our kirk from molestation during a period of several years.

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On the civil struggles of that period, and on the dissensions within the kirk itself, between the stricter and the laxer Covenanters, which followed the lamented execution of King Charles, the coronation of his son in Scotland, his defeat and flight, and the establishment of Cromwell in power over Scotland as over England, I will not dwell. With the welcome period of civil peace between 1652 and 1660 begin my recollections.

Between these peaceful years my brothers Jamie and Richie married. Jamie was a stonemason. He bought a lot in the village and built a comfortable house for himself, so that he took his bonnie bride to a home of her own. Richie followed his father's profession. He and his wife lived seven miles away from us. Mary was betrothed to our own parish minister, Alexander Ramsay by name; and in June, 1659, a year before Charles II. was restored to his father's throne, they two were married.

Steenie and I were then left to each other, and well were we satisfied with each other's companionship. At the time of my sister's marriage I was a strong, well-grown lass of thirteen, and Steenie was nearly two years older. Oh, when I think of those early years, and remember all that Steenie and others were to me, I feel that my heart has long lain low with them in the darkness of the grave. No days now are like those days; no sunshine so bright, no air so soft and balmy. Even the flowers seem changed. I think of those dear friends as I sit alone in the gloaming, and my tears often fall fast, although I feel sure that theirs are dried for ever. But human nature is weak, you know, and God knows it too; this is my comfort, for he will not think that my tears are rebellious.

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I cannot pass over that pleasant period of our lives without again speaking in detail of our family as it then was. My father was slightly bent, though more with a scholar's stoop than under the weight of years. His locks were silvered, but his eye was bright and his judgment sound. He still taught the lads and lassies of the village, and he ruled them well.

My mother showed age less than my father. I remember well how all our family looked when

Jamie's firstborn was first taken to the kirk. My mother appeared saintly in her peacefulness. Margaret, the bairn's mother, was much affected with the solemnity of the occasion—bringing her young bairn for the first time up to the house of God. Her heart was full of prayer that grace might be given her to bring him at last to the home of the blest above. Margaret and my mother were much alike, and were drawn together sympathetically.

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Richie and Ellen, his bride, were also there. She wore a white dress and a knot of wild roses at her throat. She looked very sweet and innocent.

Sister Mary had dressed with unusual care. She wore blue; it suited her well. She could see that in the wee mirror that hung in our own tidy room. Besides, had not Alexander Ramsay told her so? and was not that enough for Mary? Dear Mary! Hers was a winsome smile, and her step was like the fall of the snowflake, as my mother well said. I can see her now with my mental vision, as by the side of Alexander she walked that day from the kirk to Margaret's door. Poor gentle one! she was a sweet blossom tenderly nourished, only to be rudely crushed in the freshness of her bloom.

In summer we sometimes spent the time between the morning and afternoon service in the kirkyard. Many a time have Steenie and I strayed side by side to its farthest limits deciphering the quaint epitaphs on the rough, weather-beaten stones, only recalled from our ramble by a sight of the blue bonnet of the tall bell-ringer as he passed to his duty. Ay, ay, those Sabbaths, how they throng in my memory! Peacefully they began, peacefully they ended, the busy weeks intervening—busy, but not wearisome, for willing hands make labor light.

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Often when our work was done Steenie and I rambled far away at the sunset hour, for we loved to watch the setting from the brae on the farther side of the great hill that rises to the west of us. Sometimes, in returning, we went to David McDougal's. His was a good and happy family, and none better knew their Bibles. But after our sister was married we oftener turned our steps towards the manse, the abode of peace, love, and contentment. I often think Eden is most nearly restored to us in the homes of well-ordered families, where industry and unity of purpose prevail, where God is feared, and mankind regarded as a brotherhood.

I would fain linger amid these pleasant scenes, but I cannot. The peaceful years sped on far too fast for what was to follow.

CHAPTER III. THE SWORD UNSHEATHED.

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Soon after Charles II. was seated on the throne troubles began to thicken around us. Our kirk was early made to feel that it must either come under the yoke of a king as faithless and despotic and as determined to enforce the royal supremacy and Episcopacy as his father and grandfather, or struggle for its independence, or rather, its liberty to regard and obey our Lord Jesus Christ as the true and only Head of the church.

The Marquis of Argyle, one of the noblest supporters of our cause, was arrested, condemned, and beheaded on the 27th of May, 1661. The excellent minister, James Guthrie, was executed a few days later. This was the commencement of deeds so foul that even the stoutest of heart must ever sicken at their rehearsal.

Most of our ministers were ejected from their churches and driven from their parishes, Alexander Ramsay with the rest. He and Mary and his father and mother took refuge at our house. Curates were placed in the vacant churches, and a tax was soon imposed on all who did not go to hear them. Absences were not uncommon, for we all felt as did Bessie McDougal, who said she "couldna thole sic preaching as thae curates gie us." Accordingly we went to hear our own ministers in the field. The royal bloodhounds, as they have been well called, were for some time kept at bay by the payment of fines; but there came a time when nothing would satisfy them but the slaughter of the Lord's chosen ones.

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We knew that gangs of men were scouring the country, imprisoning, and sometimes even slaying, those who would not renounce the Covenant, now declared treasonable; and we knew not how soon we might fall into their hands.

My father was one day returning from school, leading Jamie's wee lad by the hand, when five of his countrymen, who had been bribed to do evil deeds, rode past him. Suddenly they wheeled about, faced him, and eyed him sharply.

"By my faith," said one of their number, "we hae lighted on rare game the day. Now we hae the auld deil himsel," mistaking father for Donald Ramsay, who had been a bearer of the blessed tidings of the gospel for more than forty years in our kirk.

It was vain for father to tell them that he was the village schoolmaster. They would not believe him. He had a learned look, and piety was stamped on every lineament of his face. The persecutors were not slow to discern between the true and the false. Those who counted the cause of Christ dearer than life showed in their countenances something of the holy zeal that lifted them above fear.

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"Ye say ye are nae auld Ramsay; then where is he? for it is hereabouts he bides," said the same ruffian.

Father was silent.

"If ye canna tell where he is, we will hae to think ye are auld Ramsay yoursel. Ye may as weel gang to prayer, for if ye dinna gie up your obstinacy ye may soon measure your length here on the heath."

Wee Jamie did not fully comprehend; but thinking that evil was about to befall his grandfather because he was taken for another, he called out, "Auld minister Ramsay bides wi' us, down at grandfather's."

"Do ye tell us fause, ye young whelp?" said one, and he shook the bairn roughly.

"Alas! Jamie, you should have held your peace," said my father.

"Ye needna chide the bairn, for we will hunt out a' the ranting Covenanters in Ayrshire, that I can pledge ye," said another.

"That is, if you will be allowed," said father.

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"Haud your auld tongue!" he retorted.

Father had a mind to turn in another direction, and so lead the soldiers away from his own house. He stood a moment irresolute. But Jamie, anxious to escape, ran forward, calling out, "Are ye nae coming home, grandfather?"

"Follow the lad," said the leader, "and we will hae to sharpen the auld man's wits wi' the prick o' a lance, since he doesna ken the raud hame."

Suiting the action to the word, he wounded father's right arm. All this was told us afterwards.

Mother saw them in the distance, and comprehended that the king's soldiers were abroad doing deeds of violence; but she did not know that her husband was a prisoner, and that they were coming directly to our house.

"What shall we do if they come here!" she exclaimed.

But we could do nothing but commend ourselves to the care of the heavenly Keeper.

Alexander was studying against the field-meeting on the Sabbath; his father was straining his feeble sight to read the Psalms of David, and his mother sat knitting long, warm stockings against the winter's cold. Mary's deft fingers were fast plying the needle, and I was seated at the wheel, the buzzing of which mingled with the sounds that came from the reapers in a neighboring field. This scene of industrious, peaceful home-life was at once changed to one of anxiety and alarm.

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My own mind was distracted with gloomy apprehensions. What was about to take place I knew not; but I had every reason to fear the worst. There too was my good, gentle sister, in regard to whose health we were already anxious. And there was Steenie, impetuous and bold, and most likely to anger the soldiers against himself. For myself I did not think to fear.

I begged Mary that she would hide herself, so that, if they invaded our home, she might escape the scene of disturbance and excitement; and we all joined in entreating the aged man of God to seek safety also. But he refused. I have never forgotten his look at that time. He rose and made a gesture that we should cease pleading with him.

"Wherefore should I flee?" said he. "Have I not bided safely under the shadow of the Almighty more than threescore and ten years? No, I will not leave this roof. With the help of God, Donald Ramsay will not fear to face these workers of iniquity. Besides, it may be that I shall have a word given to me to speak in season to even these, the enemies of our church and Covenant. In the meantime let none be fearful. Oh, who of us, think you, is worthy to suffer for Christ's sake? Who would not, if need be, lay down his life to win a 'well done' from the Master?"

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We all gazed at him. It seemed to me that he looked like one of the old prophets. His hoary head was raised; his eyes were bright with enthusiasm; no, it was not that: it was holy zeal, it was holy fire. His usually pale cheek glowed; his tongue was loosed; his burning words went to our souls as he continued:

"Oh, shall any of us this day be glorified? Shall any of us for this day's work wear a martyr's crown throughout eternity? Is any one among us faint-hearted? God is with us and for us; therefore lift up the hands that hang down and strengthen the feeble knees. God never sends his children to do his work without giving them strength sufficient for their needs; and offences must come. Ah, when shall the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God!"

Assuming the attitude of prayer, he raised his hand towards heaven, and with solemn voice he said, "Let us call upon the Lord in our time of trouble.

"'Our Father who art in heaven,' in these, the words of thy holy Son, we come to thee, for it was he who taught us to call thee Father. And since thou art our Father, and art more willing to give good gifts unto us than earthly parents are to give them to their children, help us, at this time, to feel assured that thou hast our best interests lying on thy fatherly heart. O thou who canst control the hearts of all men, thou who canst even be a wall of fire about thy children, look in

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compassion upon us this day. We are come into deep waters. The enemies of thine own church are even now at the thresholds of our homes. But we know well that thou art still nearer, even in the heart of every believing child of thine. And should there be any one here that fears them that can kill the body only, let such a one prove steadfast to Him whose power extends to both body and soul. Oh, fill us all with power from on high, so that we may, if called upon, even desire to suffer for Christ's sake, that we may be glorified with him. And oh, thou Holy One, who didst of thine own free will lay down thy life for the sins of the world, help us that we, thy followers, may none of us shame thee this day. So fill us with thy strength that we may be lifted far above all mortal fear. And should we have to seal our testimony with our blood, let us do it joyfully. O thou Blessed One, open thine arms to receive us as we come to the vale of shadows, and let all the mist and darkness flee away, that thou mayest stand revealed to us in all thy beauty; for thou wilt be there, according to thy word. Then, leaning on thee, we shall go to our heavenly inheritance; so shall we be for ever with the Lord. Amen."

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When the prayer was ended we hastened to the window. They were very near, and what was our surprise and alarm to see father and wee Jamie driven before them. My courage seemed for a moment to fail me. "O Steenie, what will they do with father?" I asked.

"God only knows, Effie," replied he.

Pale and dumb we waited for the end.

"It is useless to contend with them," said Alexander. "Any act of self-defence would be deemed open rebellion. One must either take flight like a guilty wretch, or stand at his post a target for bullets, for aught he knows. But we have the promise of eternal life beyond, and that more than compensates for any ill that can befall us here."

Mary, who had been standing motionless with amazement, now uttered a cry of anguish as she saw her bleeding father led up the walk. Alexander put his arm protectingly about her.

They opened the door and entered. I sprang towards my father. "Are you much hurt?" I asked.

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"Awa wi' ye!" said a soldier. "He will hae mony a waur scratch before we are dune wi' him."

Notwithstanding, as no further opposition was offered, I remained near my father. He stooped and kissed my forehead. Then I gave way to tears.

"Do not weep, my bairn," said he; "some good will come from all this seeming evil, since God allows it to be so."

"Little good, I am thinking. But I, for ane, hae nae mind for this kind o' work; and if ye will recant, ye can be set free," said one, less fierce than his fellows.

"It would not be wise to barter the favor of God for that of an earthly king," replied my father.

My mother, overcoming her fears, came forward and stood beside us. Father pressed a kiss on her pale cheek, and she leaned her head on his breast. "Alas! alas! the evil hour has come!" she exclaimed. "God help us!"

"Let the gudeman go," she said, addressing the ruffians. "What harm has he ever done to living mortal?"

"We will think twice before we grant your request, gudewife. But, if I dinna mistake, I see anither that we want still mair than him," and the speaker sharply eyed Donald Ramsay.

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The aged man advanced to meet them. "Whom are you seeking?" he asked with fearless dignity.

"We seek auld Ramsay," they replied.

"I am he," he answered. "If your business is with me, let these go their way."

"You are the king's prisoner," said one of the gang, as he laid hands on him.

Then, to our great surprise, the aged wife rose and stood beside her husband.

"Forty-and-five years have we bided happily together," said she. "Let not death divide us. Where he goes I will go."

"Take the auld wife awa; we dinna want her," said the leader.

But she refused to leave her husband's side.

"Harl her awa!" said the same voice.

Her son advanced and entreated her.

"Be it so," said she. "It will be only for a wee while. Fare ye weel, Donald, till we meet in the kingdom of our God."

"Hae ye onything to settle wi' your Maker, Ramsay?" asked the leading voice. "If ye hae, ye maun be about it, for we'll mak quick wark wi' ye."

"Trusting in the merits of Christ, I am ready. I have lived these many years in daily communion with him. But how is it with you? Think of that. Take heed to your ways lest ye die in your sins. You go about seeking to slay the Lord's chosen. What will you say when their blood is required at

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your hands? Let me entreat you to turn from your evil ways and seek forgiveness; for no sins are so great that the blood of Christ cannot atone for them."

"Haud your ranting tongue!" shouted the leader.

But lest the words of the man of God should unnerve his men, he turned to them and gave his orders.

"Ye hae listened to this fulishness long enough. Gang to your wark."

But not one of the men moved.

"Ye ken weel what ye came here for," he continued. "Wha will lay low the enemy of his country and his king?"

On hearing this the aged man made his defence.

"Why should I be accounted an enemy of the king? He who is not true to the King of kings cannot be true to an earthly king. I hold that you are not true to him yourselves, since you encourage him to foul his hands with the blood of the saints."

"Shoot him!" cried the leader.

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The order was not obeyed, and he who gave it shot him down with his own hand.

"Father, lay not this sin to their charge," said the dying man.

Alexander was at his side in a moment.

"Let me go to my old friend," entreated my father.

"Ye needna be in haste; ye will go to him soon enough," said the leader.

"Rejoice, O my friend, that you have been accounted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake," said my father.

The wounded man turned his eyes towards his wife, who had fallen into her chair. A faint smile mingled with his look of mortal agony as he whispered, "She is going too."

And so it proved. The shock had been too much for her feeble constitution; and though she still breathed, she never recovered consciousness, but passed away at set of sun.

So it indeed happened that Donald and Grisell Ramsay were not divided even in death.

CHAPTER IV. THE PRISON AND THE TOMB.

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It would not be my painful task to record these and still other mournful scenes if it had been God's time to awake for us; but he who in his very chastenings "doeth great things, which we cannot comprehend," for his glory and the good of those who love him, had decreed for us a long and weary time of weeping. So it was that the ruffians, seeing that they had made sure work, took my father from our embrace, and we never saw him more. In vain we entreated that we might at least be permitted to bind his wound.

"Let him bleed," said the leader. "It will do him good to lose some of his rebellious Covenanting blood. He will be mair gentle after the loss of it."

Why they did not molest Alexander I cannot say, unless, being strangers, they did not know he was a minister. They looked sharply at him and Steenie.

"Gang straight noo, my lads, for ye hae seen what ye may come to," said one, as a parting admonition.

We were all too sad for speech. Two of the inmates of our house lay dead in our presence; the head of the family had been taken from us, to what fate we knew not. Human effort was powerless. We could only commit our griefs and anxieties to Him without whose notice not even a sparrow falls. How much more would he watch over our father, his faithful servant.

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Without doubt it is God's will that some should glorify him in the furnace of affliction; and we may not question his providences, mysterious though they be. We are to "be still and know that he is God." Sometimes we are allowed to see why and how he leads us; when we cannot see we must trust.

But we had to rouse ourselves to action. We had mournful duties to perform for the dead in our midst, and we did the best we could in our sad, excited state. Steenie went for David and Bessie McDougal and a few other neighbors, and they performed the labor of caring for the dead. Words were useless, and few were spoken.

Partly from habit, and partly to break the stillness, I spread the board for the evening meal. No one tasted food but wee Jamie.

When all had been done that could be done, we sat down, sad and silent, in the family room. David McDougal and his wife remained with us. Then, as we never finished the day without prayer, my mother took the dear familiar Book and handed it to Alexander. He read the seventy-ninth Psalm. His voice quivered with emotion, and when he read the verse, "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee," his utterance was choked. Tears flowed for a while. I was glad he could shed them. Then by a great effort he continued:

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"According to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die; and render unto our neighbors sevenfold into their bosoms their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord. So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will show forth thy praise to all generations."

His prayer was a wail for the deliverance of the kirk and for him who was dearer to us than life.

We all wept, for we sadly missed the voice that had so long borne our petitions to the throne of heavenly grace.

At a late hour we retired to rest, if possible, after the excitements and calamities of the day. We had but laid ourselves down when mother was called to Mary's bedside. Then I remembered that when I pressed her to my heart as we parted for the night, and said, "God be with you and comfort you, my own dear sister," she replied, "He is with me, and I feel as if I should soon see him face to face." I looked at her; she was so pale, and looked so pure and heavenly, that I feared it might be even as she said. I gave her another kiss, and without trusting my voice to speak again I turned away. Now her manner, look, and words came back to me, filling me with dreadful apprehensions. Oh, the bitterness of that long night! It seemed as if it would never end. When it did end, the morning found Alexander Ramsay a father; but his bairn was motherless. Thus went out the life of one who was winsome beyond compare.

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How can we comprehend the bitterness and greatness of Alexander's bereavement! Father, mother, and wife taken from him in a few short hours!

He took the little one in his arms, kissed it fondly, and moaned, "Oh, my bairn, thou art not long for this world; then all will be gone!"

At any other time it would have been accounted a strange thing that three dead bodies should lie in one house; but then, when the persecution was on us in all its horrors, there was little wonder. Such outrages, though not common as yet, were not unknown.

We laid them all side by side in the kirkyard, and it seemed to me that when the grave closed over our Mary the joy had all gone out of my life. The friends that were left to me might pass as quickly. I felt that I had but a slender hold upon them, and I turned away with a sad feeling of desolation which I had never before experienced.

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Alexander regarded the infant as a very slender thread binding him to home, for it was evident it would soon leave the world it had entered at so inauspicious a time. When in a few days it ceased to breathe, the broken-hearted father said, "It is well with the child. Now no ties bind me. I am free to devote myself to the Lord's cause. Henceforth let me be found foremost in the ranks of those who shall do and dare for the afflicted of my church and of my country."

From this time Alexander Ramsay had no fixed abiding-place; but it was his willing service to carry consolation to the oppressed and despairing all over the country. He became the bold and fearless leader of conventicles, and the bearer of food and comforts to those who were proclaimed outlaws, and who were suffering the keenest privations and hardships for conscience' sake; for the king's agents had forbidden any, under severe penalties, to give food or shelter or succor of any kind to the hunted Covenanters. These very acts of mercy rendered him an outlaw also, and a price was soon set on his head.

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Father was confined in a miserable place only a few miles away, yet none of us were permitted to see him. Mother grieved in silence; but her grief seemed wearing her life away. I prayed that she might even weep; but that she could not do. Yet when brought to speak, which scarcely anything but my tears could accomplish, she would express her confidence that the right would prevail. "The kirk will yet have rest," she said. "The Word of the Lord will have free course, will run, and be glorified. But alas for my earthly peace! I shall never with my natural eyes behold the prosperity of Zion."

My brother Steenie chafed like a chained lion. He sought to devise a way to liberate our father, and made several unsuccessful attempts, the only result of which was a closer confinement for the prisoner. This Steenie so resented that he became the sworn foe of the oppressor. He became a marked character, and our enemies cast designing looks upon him. It was no longer safe for him to stay with us when any of the troopers were near.

My other brothers were seeking to evade the persecutors by appearing to be neutral. They were seldom present at conventicles, and sometimes attended the curate's service in the parish church. Jamie and Richie were unlike Steenie. In the first place, they had stronger ties. Their wives, their children, and their homes were very dear to them. They thought, by a seeming indifference, to escape the troubles that were constantly befalling their more demonstrative neighbors. But their caution did not please us. Even mother, troubled as she was, did not approve their course. Once when they were both sitting at our fireside, she stepped between them, and laying a hand on the shoulder of each she thus addressed them:

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"O my sons, do not imperil your eternal happiness to secure safety in this life. Remember the words of the Master: 'Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.'" Having said this, she quickly left the room.

I arose and followed her. I found her seated on a low chair, her hands pressed closely to her heart. "O God! I have done it," she said as I entered. "I have counselled them. I have triumphed over the weakness of the flesh. Thanks be to thy grace, O Lord, now the weight of this unfulfilled duty is lifted from my heart and conscience!"

CHAPTER V. UNWELCOME VISITORS.

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But we were not to escape further molestation. Troops were now sent through Ayrshire and the adjoining counties to make diligent search for such as they should please to consider rebels; and no house could hope to be exempt from their visitations.

On an evening bordering on winter we sat around our wide, warm hearth; we had already supped, and that in silence, for all knew, except my nephew, that search would soon be made in our neighborhood. We did not expect to be molested that night, but still the news had made me fearful, and I had barred the door. Watch, the wee house-dog, was sleeping on the hearth. The wind was making sad music without, while now and then a gust drove the smoke from the chimney into the room. It was an evening to accord with my feelings; for I was brooding over the desolation of our spiritual state and the dangers which threatened us, particularly Steenie; and a tear once fell on wee Jamie's head, which rested on my lap as he sat on a stool at my feet.

"Will you never have done wi' greetin', Aunt Effie?" asked he. "You are far stouter of heart when trouble is on us than when we are clear of it." [Pg 222]

Just then David McDougal knocked and was admitted.

"I am come," said he, addressing Steenie, "to tell you that ye hae nae time to lose. Take to your heels, man!"

"I have no inclination to run," replied Steenie resolutely. "I would rather fight than run any day."

"Hoot, man, what would you do, wi' a score o' thae sons o' Belial lightin' doon in your midst! Awa wi' ye, and haud back a' the fight that is in ye till ye hae a fair chance in the field."

Just then the wee dog pricked up his ears. We looked at one another. David nodded, as if to say, "I told you so." A moment later we distinctly heard the tramp of horses. Mother waved her hand, silently bidding Steenie leave us. He wrapped his plaid about him and hurriedly embraced us.

"Be cautious, my dear brother, and hide yourself well," said I.

"God be with you!" said our mother.

"The great Shepherd of Israel keep thee," said our neighbor.

"Gang to the opening in the Black Rock," said wee Jamie, who had grown wise by our terrible experiences; "but tak tent to your feet; it maun be icy there. Rin, and hae nae fears for me. I winna betray you, though they should pull ilka hair frae my head." [Pg 223]

We smiled sadly at the lad, in spite of ourselves, Steenie and I, he was such an old-fashioned bairn. Poor wee man! he had need of all his wits before an hour was past.

Steenie went out into the cold and darkness, and David went with him; Steenie to go where Jamie had said, and David to return home.

I again barred the door. Some little time had elapsed when there was a loud knock. I did not move. No act of ours was to admit them, although we knew they would soon break in upon us. A moment later force was used to burst open the door. But although it creaked, it withstood repeated assaults. Then the window was broken in, and one after another the legalized ruffians leaped into our midst.

"How comes it, my auld dame, and you, my bright-eyed lassie, that ye are sae dull o' hearin'? Ye s'ould hae made speed to entertain the king's messengers, sin' we hae sic a modest request to mak o' your leddyships. We want naething but the deliverin' up o' your son and brother;" and with a smile of impertinence and exultation the speaker gazed at us to observe the effect of his request. [Pg 224]

"There are none in the house but ourselves, as ye may see," said my mother.

"Where then is Stephen Patterson?"

"Please God, he is out o' your reach."

"Aweel, there are ways and means to unseal tight lips, ye ken," said he, nodding significantly. "We will begin wi' the bairn. Ken ye aught o' your uncle?" asked the man, who, strange as it may seem, had once called himself our friend, and, I doubt not, had more than once held Jamie on his

knee. Now he was our worst enemy. He had volunteered to lead the way up and down braes, through hills and dales, by wimpling burns and wraith-haunted lochs, in order to tear from peaceful homes the honored and the good. Such was the man who questioned Jamie. I blessed the brave lad in my heart, while I trembled for the effect of his answer.

"If I do, or if I dinna, it is a' the ane thing to you."

"We shall see whether it is or no. When did he gang awa?"

No answer was given.

"When did he awa? I hae asked you. Was it the nicht?"



Still no answer.

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"We will soon gar ye tell all ye know," said the man, as he took from his pocket a match. Lighting it at the fire, he placed it between the poor lad's fingers, and held it there. "That will soon fetch an answer," said he.

The tears coursed down poor Jamie's cheeks, but he made no moan. I did not dare open my lips for fear I should anger them still more; but my mother could not see the bairn tortured and hold her peace.

"Leave the bairn go," she said authoritatively. "Ye hae hearts harder than a millstone."

"Are ye in ony hurry for your ain share?" asked the ruffian.

"I would liefer bear it than see the bairn bear it," was her reply.

"Weel, if it suits ye, we will leave the bairn and try yoursel."

So saying, he seized her hand and applied the burning match. She raised her eyes, looking steadfastly upward as she repeated the following portion of God's Word—the sixty-fourth Psalm:

"Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy.

"Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked, from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity,

"Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words, [Pg 226]

"That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.

"They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them?

"They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep.

"But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded.

"So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away.

"And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing.

"The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory."

The match had burned out, but she had disclosed nothing.

"Perhaps the lassie has a glib tongue," said one, and he sought another match to torture me. Following my mother's example, I too had recourse to the Sword of the Spirit. I repeated, though not as calmly as she had, these words, feeling more truly than ever their comfort: [Pg 227]

"In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.

"Deliver me in thy righteousness and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me and save me.

"Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me, for thou art my rock and my fortress.

"Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man."

"These cursed people all have the Scriptures at their tongues' end," one of them was saying, when a sudden blast of wind shook our little cottage till all could feel it rock. The smoke was driven down the chimney, and came into the room in great puffs, and the candle went out. All was confusion. The men were seized with fear, and when the fire again sent out a ruddy glow, they hastened to find the door and escape.

"The very elements fight for them," said one as they hurried away.

Steenie heard them gallop down the lane and out on the high road. Convinced that they were gone, he returned to the house. [Pg 228]

"The Lord has delivered us all," said mother.

"Yes," said Steenie, "we are all safe; but it is only for the present. Sooner or later I am sure to fall into their hands. But, as David McDougal was saying, I would like it if we could encounter our enemies on the battlefield."

Jamie showed his uncle his burned hand. Steenie carried it to his lips. "Poor wee man!" said he, "did you indeed have to suffer for Uncle Steenie's sake?"

"Grandmother did too," said the lad.

"It is a fearful state of things," said Steenie, "when women and bairns are not safe at their own firesides."

From that time Steenie sought to evade his pursuers, and his life was generally that of a wanderer. Often he narrowly escaped being taken. Frequently we laid ourselves down without knowing where he was or how he fared; but whether the earth was wet with summer dew or wrapped in winter's snow, he was always the subject of our ardent prayers. How often I would have shared his night-watches if it could have been so. I carried food to him when I knew where he was; aside from this we could do nothing but pray.

CHAPTER VI. DEFEAT AT RULLION GREEN.

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In November, 1666, some of our people at the South became entangled, under great provocation, in a skirmish with some of Turner's soldiers; knowing that this would bring further trouble, they resolved to remain in arms. Coming northward, they gathered a little strength as they advanced. On reaching Ayrshire some of our acquaintances joined them, Steenie, Alexander, and good, honest David McDougal with the rest. Moving in a northeasterly direction, they came to Lanark. Here they renewed their Covenant, and called to mind their grievances, at the same time publishing a declaration vindicating themselves from rebellion. Though frost and snow and hunger and fatigue made dreadful inroads on their little army, they pushed on boldly till they came within a few miles of Edinburgh, which, unexpectedly, they found in arms against them. Knowing that they were pursued by a force larger than their own, and that to remain where they were was to sacrifice their lives to no purpose, they began a retreat, and halted at a place called Rullion Green, on a ridge of the Pentland Hills. Here they were attacked by the pursuing army, which had turned out of its course to intercept them. The Covenanters, stout of heart and confident of the righteousness of their cause, fought valiantly, and several times put their assailants to flight; but they were finally overpowered by superiority of numbers. Many of our brave men were left dead or dying on the field, and more were taken prisoners. Some of these met a cruel death afterwards, and several were put to the torture before they were hanged.

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Steenie made his escape, and, after long and painful wanderings, travelling by night and hiding by day, he at last came to us weary and worn. Yet, weary and footsore as he was, the poor lad could not venture to bide within or rest one night under his mother's roof. He remained, however, long enough to tell us that several of our friends and neighbors had sealed their covenant with their blood.

"David McDougal fell beside me early in the fray," said Steenie. "With his last breath he exhorted his brethren to continue the struggle. 'Fight the good fight of faith, my comrades,' said he, 'and the great Leader of your cause strengthen your hearts and your hands!' With a sore heart I bent over him and asked if I could do anything for him. 'I want naething mair in this world,' he replied. 'But gang ye back to the fray, and slacken nae whit while ye hae strength to stand. Tell the folk at hame that auld Davie McDougal regretted that he had but ane life to lay down for his Master. Tell the gudewife that though we gang hame by different roads, we shall meet at the end of the journey.'"

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Alexander was taken prisoner, and suffered with those who were condemned to be hanged at the Cross of Edinburgh. His right hand was cut off and nailed up at Lanark, because there he had

lifted it in making oath to the Covenant. Thus perished the last member of a peaceful, God-serving family. In considering their fate, one cannot but recall the words of the apostle Paul: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." But, thank God, this is not the only life of Christians; and by whatever way they may be led to that other life, they shall find that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory" that they shall share.

CHAPTER VII. THE WANDERER.

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A body of soldiers now ranged through our part of the country, seeking out Covenanters who had taken any part in the late rising, and perpetrating all such deeds of cruelty as their evil thoughts could devise. Some were tortured for aiding their friends to escape. Life and property were at the mercy of these ruthless invaders.

Steenie was obliged to remain in hiding. Sometimes, when I knew where he was, I stole out to him in the gloaming. Seated on the same rock, with my hand in his, I passed an hour or more with him; but never did I do so without fearing it might be the last time. In the long summer evenings I sometimes stayed and chatted till a late hour, and, after a bit of forgetfulness, it did seem almost like old times. One of those evenings I have special cause to remember. The air was delightfully fresh, and fragrant with the scent of summer blossoms. The wye sang its song in the woods anent us; the owl hooted on the cliff; and the wee, timid hare, startled by our footsteps on the dry twigs, ran across our path. For the time we dropped all thoughts of fear. We were at the back of our own cottage, in the thicket where in our childhood we had often played. The moonlight glinted through it as of yore, and a bit to the north sang the same busy, babbling brook. Oh, that was an evening long to be remembered!

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"One can almost forget that he is a hunted fugitive in a place and a time like this," said Steenie.

"Yes, Steenie," I answered, "would to God we were clear of the great trouble which we this evening have been able to put from our minds."

While I was yet speaking the sound of horses' feet was borne to our ears on the still night air.

"Go home quickly, Effie," said Steenie, "and I'll not stop till I am hidden behind the black crags."

As I entered the house I found mother sitting with wee Jamie, for he was aye at our house since father was led away. Mother saw something was amiss, but she questioned only by look.

"The troopers," I said.

"Where is Steenie?"

"Well on to a place of safety by this time."

"God protect him!" she murmured.

The soldiers soon surrounded our house. Three of them entered and searched it. We had hurried the bairn to bed and bidden him turn his face to the wall, and on no account show that he was awake, rightly thinking they would not be likely to wake him. Mother and I suffered much from their insolence, and they bore away with them whatever they chose to take, otherwise we came to no harm.

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After this Steenie was almost lost to us for a long time. It was very seldom he could be found in the places where he was wont to be concealed, so diligent was the search for those who had fought at Rullion Green.

Sometimes we saw him at conventicles. These meetings were then held in unfrequented places, and often under the cover of darkness. Precious was the divine message to our long-waiting souls, and our thoughts were uplifted by the power of the truth. But with me the feeling of exaltation would subside, leaving in my heart a weary waste, a dread uncertainty, a fearful looking forward to some unknown yet certain evil. In God was my trust; but humanity is frail, and the sickness of heart that attends blighted hopes was often mine to bear.

On the few occasions when I saw my brother I observed that he grew wan and pale—that he had at times a look almost amounting to fierceness. Naturally ambitious, he chafed at his inactivity, and was tormented by a throng of unfulfilled desires. Although we hoped he had been born into the kingdom of grace, and was willing to follow where Providence led, still the natural man struggled against the submission that was to keep him in hiding.

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The bonnie summer months had passed, the cool and pleasant autumn also, and winter was again upon us. Not a few were pinched with hunger, for oppression had wrung from many families nearly all their means of subsistence. We often thought of Steenie and prayed for him; but we knew not where he was, as the cold had driven him from all his old haunts.

One wild December night we sat by our comfortable fire: without, the hoarse wind roared in strange tones and in loud blasts that were fearful even to those who were comfortably housed. I

was looking at the window opposite me, and almost reproaching myself for receiving so many comforts since they were denied to Steenie. Just then some one knocked at the door. I felt at once that it was my wandering brother; and so it was. But oh, how changed! He had been driven by actual hunger to venture home. The man whom we had employed to carry food to him, and whom we had liberally paid, even to the abatement of our own comforts, had proved faithless.

Great was our surprise and joy to behold our Steenie once more, and great was our sorrow to see him as he was, chilled and sick as well as hungry. I fastened the door again and drew the window-curtain, and mother and I both hastened to set food before the half-famished lad. Being warmed and refreshed, he began to talk freely, for at first he was too much exhausted to say much.

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"This is not life," he said with bitterness, "and if I am never in some active way to serve my family and friends in the true cause, I wish that I might die. Why do not our party take the field? Our condition could scarcely be worse. I might as well be captured if I am to have free limbs only to lie behind rocks until they are benumbed from disuse. I shall bide here to-night; I shall sleep once more under our own roof; and if I am taken, I am taken."

The morning found him far from well and in no condition again to brave the rigors of winter. I bethought me of a little nook over the cow-shed that could be made very comfortable, and that would be little likely to attract attention. We made him a bed there, and we did not spare the best in the house. We carried some books up to him, and did all we could for his comfort; then we closed the trap-door, so that there appeared to be no opening. The ladder was drawn up into the little corner he occupied, and he thus had the means to let himself down whenever he chose. Having made these arrangements, we trusted that he was safe for the present.

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But it soon became apparent that he was in danger of being betrayed by our own wee dog, for the affectionate creature sniffed and barked about the byre the whole time to win to his master. We thought at first to tie him up; but this might be inquired into and lead to a search. Some of our own neighbors we could scantily trust; and if any one had let the dog loose he would have gone straight to Steenie. I soon thought out a sure way to end that difficulty, but I said nothing about my plan.

When I gathered up the scraps from the table and put them into Watch's tray, I cast poison on the meat; and I mind well that a tear dropped in with it all, for I was fond of the wee doggie. But he must not live to endanger Steenie, although it was the poor beast's joy at his master's return that caused him to make such a din.

At noon I noticed that Jamie put aside a portion of his meat. "I'll no pick the banes clean the day," said he, seeing that his movements were observed, "because the doggie is sick-like, for he wanna play with me. I'll coax him a bit wi' the fresh meat."

I felt sorry for the bairn, but I said nothing.

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After a while he came in, looking very sad. "Aunt Effie," said he sorrowfully, "Watch wanna tak his meat. I fear he will dee."

I patted his head. "Poor wee laddie, it is a tender heart you have," said I. I did not know what else to say.

An hour or two later he came in again, greeting outright. "Wee Watch is deid, Aunt Effie; wee Watch is deid!" and he sobbed as if his heart would break.

It seems a small thing to write, but to the bairn it was a great sorrow; he had lost his only companion. We had been so much occupied with our own troubles that we scarcely gave him a thought beyond seeing that he was well clothed and fed; but I can feel a pang even now for the grief of the poor bairn on account of the death of his playmate.

We succeeded in keeping Steenie safely through the winter, though there were times when our hearts quaked with fear. In spring-time, as the weather grew milder, he went back to his old retreats.

CHAPTER VIII.

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VICTORY OF DRUMCLOG AND DEFEAT AT BOTHWELL BRIDGE.

I pass over in silence ten or a dozen years of continued oppression, which brought us little change save that our hearts grew ever sadder.

It had been declared a treasonable act to attend a conventicle, and troops were sent through the country with orders to suppress them at the point of the sword; therefore we no longer met in small bodies.

In May, 1679, a great conventicle was appointed to be held on a moor near Lanark. Steenie went up in company with many others from among us. No secret was made of the meeting, and most of the men went armed. Claverhouse with his dragoons was then in Glasgow. He marched directly to Loudoun Hill, or Drumclog, the place where our people had assembled for worship. He seized

some who were on the way to the meeting and drove them before him. The service was scarcely commenced when the alarm was given. Our people flew to arms to defend themselves, and in the battle that ensued they were the victors. Elated with hope, the people flocked to our standard, and a large force was soon in the field.

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My two older brothers and my nephew Jamie, now a grown man, thought of joining the army. They were weary of fines, robberies, and all the oppressions which they suffered. They felt that they could no longer submit to these things and lift up their heads as free-born Scots should do.

While they were weighing the matter tidings of our father's death reached us. He with others had been taken from the place of their imprisonment and driven like beasts before the merciless soldiers. My father, weak from age, long confinement, and insufficient nourishment, became exhausted, and lagged in the march. A brutal soldier pierced him with a spear, and he fell. His head and hands were cut off and exposed to public gaze at Edinburgh. The mangled body was left without proper burial. The enemy alleged, in justification of their conduct, that he was the most obstinate of all the "ranting rebels."

Ah, well we understood that charge! It meant that torture, keenest torture, had been his; and he had borne it uncomplainingly, sustained by God's grace.

And now when I think of the Heavenly City, and of the just made perfect who dwell there, I can almost see my father amid the throng of the redeemed; I can almost hear him sing praises to God and the Lamb with the tongue that never denied the faith while on earth.

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My brothers and nephew no longer hesitated, as may well be supposed. Margaret, James' wife and the mother of Jamie, no longer "wee," freely gave her consent. "Alas!" she said, "war is a fearsome thing; but since it is your duty to go, go, and may God protect you both and bring you safe home."

Ellen could not feel the same resignation. She clung to Richie till the last moment, almost upbraiding him for leaving her. He turned on her a look in which pity was blent with reproach.

"Ellen," he said, "I cannot forget that I am a man, and not a dog. I can no longer patiently suffer these outrages."

With aching hearts they took leave of their weeping families, their own eyes filled with tears and their lips tremulous with unspoken anxieties. But they bravely endeavored to suppress their emotion, and, sustained by firmness of purpose and hopeful anticipation of righted wrongs, they tore themselves away.

Bessie McDougal, who could never forget her loss at Rullion Green, still, with patriotic piety, encouraged her only son Robert to devote himself to the cause of our kirk and country. She came with him as far as our house, for Robert was to go with Jamie and Richie. I very well remember how she looked at that time. Naturally cheerful, hale, and ruddy, she had borne up remarkably well under her afflictions. But her cheek had grown paler and her step less firm and elastic, so that she leaned a little heavily on the stout walking-stick she carried.

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It was at our door that she took leave of Robert. Collecting all her strength, she took her son's hand and bravely spoke her farewells.

"Robert, my son, you are my only earthly prop and stay; but I will nae grudge ye to God and his ain cause. And if my auld e'en shall behold your face nae mair in the flesh, we shall meet again where troubles are nae mair. Should you fall in battle, you will but follow in the steps of him who has gane before you. Gie your mither a kiss, my bairn. Fare ye weel, fare ye weel!"

The bereaved mother turned to retrace her steps towards her now solitary home. We called after her to come in and stop a while. "I can neither gie nor tak comfort," said she, "and I would fain grieve in my ain hame."

Our own hearts were sore too, as any one may judge, seeing that all our loved ones who could bear the sword were away to face danger and death. But sorer yet would they have been if we could have foreseen the disastrous defeat of our army at Bothwell Bridge, a defeat chargeable in no small degree to the dissensions that nearly rent our people asunder.

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Oh, that dreadful day! Even now the memory of it comes unbidden far oftener than the morning sun salutes the earth. My brother Jamie, my poor, sad mother's firstborn, was left on that fatal field cold in death—Jamie, the husband of the good, brave, patient Margaret, and father of six bonnie bairns. Oh, what a stroke was that! Then when we called to mind how many fathers, sons, and brothers, of the very flower of Scotland, shared a like fate, we cried out in bitterness of soul,

"O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself. Lift up thyself, thou Judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud. Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?"

But I have more to tell of that terrible battle. Richie was one of the twelve hundred who, when all was lost, threw down their arms and cried for quarter. They were taken prisoners to Edinburgh, and penned, half naked, in the same Grayfriars kirkyard in which the Covenant was signed in 1638. They were herded there for five months like so many brute beasts, without shelter by day or covering by night. At the end of that time, Richie and many others regained their freedom by signing a bond never again to take up arms against the king.

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Steenie was thrice taken prisoner, and as many times made his escape. Just as he was leaving the field he stumbled over the dead body of Jamie. In regaining his feet his eye caught sight of the dear, familiar face, then rigid in death. Regardless of consequence he threw himself down beside his lifeless brother. Two soldiers rode that way in search of flying fugitives. Seeing a living man among the dead, they halted. Struck with the grief and affection that could lead to such a disregard of personal safety, some touch of humanity returned to their stony hearts.

"What hinders us to run you through, man?"

"It is all one to me," replied Steenie. "My brother is dead, and our cause is lost."

"Let us show pity to our fellow-mortal," said one to the other, "and when death comes to us, I warrant we shall not grieve at the mercy."

"Rise and take to your heels," said the first speaker, "and hide yourself as soon as you can. If your escape is seen it may cost us our lives." [Pg 245]

Steenie afterwards told Robert McDougal, who also escaped, that he was so thoroughly weary of life under the tyranny of the oppressor that nothing but thoughts of the grief his death would cause our mother made him avail himself of the mercy shown by the two humane soldiers. "But," added he, "what, after all, signifies an escape that must eventually end in torture or death?" He knew that for those who would not renounce the Covenant life could be but a weary waiting and lurking in wild moors and caves.

From this time Steenie and Robert were inseparable. I scarcely could see one without the other. The truth came slowly to me that Robert was especially interested in me, and that Steenie was glad it was so. I never could see why he was glad, since in those troublous times no tie could be so binding as to secure to us the companionship of our friends.

My nephew Jamie was spared to us. A serious and lingering illness had suddenly prostrated him and prevented him from joining the Covenanters' army, according to his intention; and when news of his father's death and of our crushing defeat came, his mother was still watching by his bedside. As his strength slowly returned, she blessed God for the sickness that for the time had so increased her sorrow and her cares, but in which she now saw the divine hand in mercy holding her son back from death or capture on the field. And truly she needed Jamie, her other bairns being much younger than he, and all lasses but the youngest. [Pg 246]

Richie's return was a source of thankfulness; yet Steenie would never have accepted liberty on such conditions. Ellen was overjoyed; she had no regrets that he was never again to fight for liberty of conscience. But his health was never again robust; he had suffered too much from exposure in his confinement at Edinburgh.

Margaret welcomed Richie with tears.

"I rejoice with you, dear Ellen, at the return of your husband," she said. "Mine will never come back to me. I do not even know where his body lies. But the trump of God will wake him; and we shall meet again in a better world, where are no wars nor rumors of wars, no more crushing by a tyrant's heel, no more heart-achings or heart-breakings. There the great King himself will bid his subjects be glad for evermore."

CHAPTER IX. THE SHEPHERD SMITTEN.

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The state of the country was daily becoming more terrible. No one felt safe at any time.

The daring exploits of Steenie and Robert drew upon them blessings from their friends but curses from their enemies. They were obliged again to exercise the greatest care to hide themselves from the armed bands that Claverhouse sent in every direction to hunt to the death all that had escaped from Bothwell Bridge. We risked our lives in giving them comforts, for the persecutors, enraged that any had escaped, took measures to punish most severely those who should succor friend or stranger. Some of our own acquaintances suffered death by lingering torture for no other offence. Can my readers imagine the feelings of a mother, a wife, or a sister, who, knowing her loved ones were suffering, scarcely dared give them food, or even speak to them?

As a rule, those who were true to the good cause were dear to each other. But some, I am grieved to say, had a "zeal that was not according to knowledge." They had suffered so much that they were nearly demented. They would not listen to reason, even when counselled by their best friends; and they did rash deeds that made things worse for us all. [Pg 248]

And now I have a sad tale to tell. I would it were the only one of its kind!

Few were more zealous in every good work than Rev. Hugh McAdam. He counted not his life dear to him, but cheerfully risked it in works of love and mercy. He sought out the wanderers, carried them food and clothing, prayed with them, and exhorted them to steadfastness in the holy cause. When we thought it safe, we gathered on a lone moor and he broke the bread of life to our famishing souls.

He and his sweet daughter Janet were loved by all our suffering people; yet it was the sorrowful lot of many of us to see him shot down at a conventicle, in the presence of his daughter, and while the words of Christian counsel were yet on his lips. Though death lurked in every corner, and similar scenes were not new to many of us, few deaths caused so universal sorrow in our neighborhood.

Orders to disperse were unnecessary. The men seized their arms and prepared to defend the retreating assembly; but the dragoons, few in number, galloped quickly away having done the foul deed. The little band, that had met with so much hope and confidence, returned sad and dispirited to their homes. The body of the beloved minister was borne with us from the field, and Bessie McDougal took the orphaned daughter home with her.

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When I reached home I found that some one had already told mother the dreadful news. She met me at the door. "Alas! alas!" she exclaimed, "what is to become of the sheep when so many of the shepherds are taen awa?"

"There is still the great Shepherd of Israel," answered I. "When the right time comes, he will gird himself with might and deliver his flock."

"Oh, ay, my bairn, I maunna forget that; but trouble has been my portion so long that both heart and flesh quake and quail under every new sorrow. But I am glad you can aye have sae muckle faith."

Dear mother! She little knew with what sickness of heart I turned to my duties. Again and again the face of the dead as I had seen it in the morning came before me. His silvered locks were matted with gore, despoiling of its comeliness the face on which age had sat with so winsome a grace.

But if we were so unsettled by the sad event, how must the new inmate of Bessie McDougal's home have felt? The good woman had no lack of tenderness and sympathy, and when Janet's tears still flowed she did not try to check them.

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"Greet on, hinny, greet on," she said. "Let your tears spend themsels. I ken weel the heart is less heavy when the e'en o'erflow. Auld Bessie has had troubles o' her ain; but there has aye been comfort gien to her in them a'; and the same Comforter will bring comfort to yoursel in his ain gude time. He wunna be vexed wi' ye that ye mourn. He kens a' our frames, and he kens that we are but dust and weakness."

In this way did this mother in Israel bring Christ before the afflicted daughter, until her heart was drawn closer to Him who is so gentle and so considerate of human frailties.

After we had buried the slain servant of the Lord in our own kirkyard, Bessie McDougal, whose home was ever a shelter to those in distress, begged the orphaned Janet to bide with her. Her great motherly heart warmed towards the daughter of her old and Christian counsellor. Indeed, many would have opened their doors to the bonnie lass who was so sorely smitten, but when Bessie questioned, "Will ye bide wi' me, puir stricken lamb?" Janet gladly answered, "I will."

Somewhere on these pages it will be my pleasant duty to tell how Janet repaid with filial affection the kindness of her friend.

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In these times I often went to see sister Margaret and cheer her loneliness as much as I could. She had removed her family from their house in the village to a small cottage nearer to mother and me. While the excitement about our murdered minister was still fresh I went to spend the evening with her. Jamie took the minister's death much to heart.

"I have often thought to be a minister myself," said he, "but now I scarcely ken whether I am willing. I could fight on the battlefield, but it is a fearsome thing to be hunted and shot down like a wild beast."

"Yes, Jamie," replied his mother, "it is a fearsome thing; but God grant that before you are prepared to stand up before his people the scourge will be removed from Scotland."

"And yet we believe that martyrs have a brighter crown in the heavenly inheritance, and a more abundant entrance into the joy and service of the King."

"Yes, we believe that, Jamie. But there is opportunity in every life for winning an abundant entrance. Ay, ay, there are many ways to glorify God and prove his sustaining grace."

Margaret bore up bravely in her bereavement. She had little time to yield to sorrow. To support her fatherless bairns required the utmost efforts of Jamie and herself.

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When it was time for me to leave them for the night, she told Jamie to take the good Book and read the tenth Psalm.

Jamie read, while Margaret's full heart often prompted her to interrupt him with some earnest comment, as she felt the force of the truth and applied it to present circumstances.

"The Lord will hear in his own good time," she remarked as Jamie concluded. "Meanwhile we will take all our griefs and cares to him, and so far as we can we will leave them all with him."

Then she knelt and poured out her heart in prayer. Since her husband's death she and Jamie had kept burning the sacred fire on the family altar.

CHAPTER X. BRIDAL AND BURIAL.

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In the chill gray of an autumnal morning Janet McAdam awoke in her new home a few days after her father's burial. With the first dawning of consciousness came always the leaden weight of grief. But she had been prepared for changes the most dreadful; and with the remembrance of her loss came the comforting thought that her father had entered into his rest, though rough had been his exit from this world of trouble. In this thought she found some consolation. "No storm can reach him now in the calm haven he has entered," she murmured. She rose and dressed herself with her usual care; then, kneeling down, she asked for strength equal to her day.

In an adjoining room Bessie McDougal was already busy with her morning duties. With a huge pair of tongs she drew from the bed of ashes in the fireplace the brands she had buried the night before. These she placed close to the back-log, and, laying on some bits of wood, she soon had a blaze that crackled and roared in a right comfortable, homelike way. She was hanging the kettle over the fire when Janet entered the room.

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"How hae ye sleepit, my bairn?" she asked.

"I have slept quite well, thank you. Can I help you now?"

"Nae, dearie, nae. The kettle will nae mair than boil before I am in frae the byre. Tak ye the Ward of God, and seek out a portion suited to your need."

Bessie went out to do the work that Robert would have done if he could have remained at home. She unfastened the door of the byre, went in, looked around to see that all was right, and gently patted the cow. "Puir beastie, I maunna forget ye amid a' the troubles," she said, thinking aloud. She fed her with a liberal hand, then scattered grain for the fowls. These were all she had to care for now, for the soldiers had taken from her whatever they liked. Having finished her work there, she returned to the house.

The kettle was already boiling. She prepared the morning meal, spread the table, and the two sat down. Short and simple was the prayer of thankfulness for daily bread which the good woman offered. For a while they ate in silence, for trouble aye makes us think more and speak less. Bessie's voice at length broke the stillness. Pointing to the head of the table, she said,

"It was there David aye sat, and there," pointing to the window-sill, "he laid his bonnet. And it was on that side Robert sat. Alas! the ane will come nae mair, and the ither maun steal his chance if he comes. These are times to try the strongest faith;" and she wiped her tearful eyes. Then observing that the other was taking very little food, she spoke more cheerfully:

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"Janet, my bairn, ye maun do better than this at your meals, and graw stoot."

She had scarcely finished speaking when Robert, her son, entered, followed by Steenie.

Great was the astonishment of Bessie. She embraced her son and warmly pressed the hand of his companion. She piled high the hearth-fire and heaped the table with plenty. But she could not bring herself to ask what had brought them there. She feared it might be to say good-by before facing known danger.

The hungry men made inroads on the cakes and cheese; and well they might.

"Oh, my bairn," sad the glad, sad mother, "when will ye daily sit at this table and pass your evenings at your ain hearthstane?"

"When I am let, mother."

"I must take a look at the beasts," said Robert, when the meal was finished.

His mother, unwilling to lose one precious moment of her son's stay, went with him to the byre. Robert's anger was kindled to find that the sheep had all been driven away, and only one cow out of three was left.

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But he had other thoughts in his mind, and he spoke of me, of Effie Patterson.

"It is no a time to marry, or to be gien in marriage," said his mother, "and I would leifer ye would bring nae mair care on yoursel while these times last."

"What you say is o'er true, mother; but one canna always keep down his heart. It is one of the hardest features of this troubled time that a man has no power to shield and protect his own household. But for all that, I would fain call Effie mine. If I am slain by the enemy, you must tell her that naught but the fear of adding to the dangers which now beset her path has kept me from declaring my love for her and asking her hand in marriage. And, mother, Steenie's heart is bound up in the lass Janet. He cannot hide his sympathy for her in this her time of bereavement. It is that that has brought us here the morn. He would fain tell her he sorrows for her sake. You did well to take her in; it is like you, mother; only you must not care more for her than you care for Effie."

"Oh, my bairn, I canna promise. The dear lass wi' me has nae kin left to her; and if she twines

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hersel about my auld heart, I canna thrust her aside for anither. It was but the morn that my silly fancy was imagining the times again settled, and yoursel hame and weel; but never mind what I was about to say. Effie is a gude, gentle soul, and helpfu' witha'; and should it be that we hae peace granted to us, ye will see that I can love Effie weel, although I love anither lass as mickle."

This is word for word what Bessie told me more than two years afterwards; but two years afterwards was not then. No, no; and how much of sorrow was yet to be crowded into those two years is my painful task to relate.

There were no more real battles after that of Bothwell Bridge, but only skirmishes, where a few on both sides met by accident or otherwise.

I will now leave off telling what happened throughout the country, and relate what more particularly concerned myself and my friends.

Steenie, as you may know from what I have said, was like the apple of my eye. I liked not to think the time might come when another would have a deeper hold on his affections; and I persuaded myself that this would never be. But, like it or not, it was all the same thing in the end. When Janet McAdam's father was shot, Steenie's heart went over to his orphan daughter with one great bound, and his sister was never to be the same to him as before. I always thought that his love for Janet was born of pity, for when the trouble came to her she stretched her hands imploringly towards heaven in helpless, hopeless agony; and that meek and mute appeal to the great and good God reached also a brave and loving human heart. But there was cause for admiration as well as pity, for hers was truly a sweet face to look upon. Her eyes closed slowly, and the long, dark, silken lashes fell on her pale cheek, while the sensitive quivering of the mouth showed her great effort to bear up bravely. Many times was it whispered then and there, "See the dear sweet lassie! See the dear smitten lamb!"

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But whatever was the first cause of Steenie's love, it was deep and lasting. I did not know his feelings in regard to her till he told me himself. It was wrong, it was selfish, but I liked Janet less from that very moment. I regarded her as an intruder. I turned away with a stony look on my face and a weight at my heart. I did not look at Steenie, but I felt that his eyes were following me. I knew there was entreaty in them, but I would not listen to the voice within me, "You are wrong, Effie." He told me he had already made known to her his love; so there was nothing for me to do but submit to unkind fate, as I in my blindness thought. I had pictured Steenie always living with mother and me, with peace and plenty restored to us. I thought that together we would soothe the declining years of our aged parent; together we would read and walk, as in past days.

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Steenie told me that I also was beloved. I gave him no reply. I did not then know that I could feel love beyond that which I cherished for my brother, and I thought he said this that I might grieve less for his companionship. I was offended, and for the first time in my life I parted from my brother with coldness.

Six months passed, during which we seldom met. At the end of that time Steenie was married. The ceremony was performed quietly, and even secretly, at Bessie McDougal's house.

I was still displeased, although I made a faint show of affection for my new sister; but it was so unreal that neither my mother nor Steenie were deceived by it. Janet, in her sweet trustfulness, accepted it. Mother told me I was unreasonable; but I said it was Steenie who was unreasonable—to marry when death stared him in the face; but certain it is that was not the cause of my opposition to the marriage.

Steenie was still obliged to remain in concealment most of the time. Robert McDougal and a few other brave men were with him. Sometimes they came down upon a stray party of the enemy to liberate one of their captive brethren; but oftener they were stationed at a little distance to warn and guard the people as they convened to worship God.

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It was on a bonnie June morning in 1683 that we were thus convened and he was thus on duty. A spy communicated with the persecutors, and a troop of horse came in hot haste towards us. In less time than I can write it a bullet pierced Steenie, and he fell to the ground. The soldiers passed on to the open glade in which the meeting was held; but the people were scattered in every direction.

Regardless of danger, we, his friends, hurried to the spot. I was among the last to reach him. As I approached I heard him ask, "Where is Effie?" "I am come," I said, as I knelt beside him and kissed his brow, then pale and strange in his struggle with death. He looked affectionately at me, and seemed to wish for something. I put my arm around Janet, who was weeping over him, and drawing her closer to me I kissed her again and again. Then he smiled a faint, glad smile, and beckoned me to come nearer. I bent my ear to catch his words, which were becoming more indistinct. He spoke of Robert. "Do not turn away from my old and true friend," he whispered. Fainter and fainter were the words which came from the fast whitening lips, till every sound died away. A slight motion of the lips, and a scarcely perceptible heaving of the chest, and Steenie's soul took flight to that bonnie land where we well believe there is no more sorrow.

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The agony of poor Janet was very great. Twice within one year had the dearest object of her earthly affections been ruthlessly slain. I looked at her, though I scarcely dared to do so. I saw that strong arms were supporting her; they were those of Robert McDougal. His face was very pale, but his voice was steady as he said, "One less with us, one more in heaven."

It is hard to give up our friends, even from a peaceful death-bed, when we can realise that God's hand alone rules; but to feel that our loved ones fall a prey to the anger of their oppressors—the innocent by the hand of the guilty—is a sore trial to the most trusting Christians. There are moments when the human nature within them cries out for redress, if not for vengeance. I felt as if my own heart would burst between sorrow for Janet and my anguish for the loss of Steenie.

We were bearing our dead from the fatal spot when, strange to say, I first thought of my mother, who was in our little home miles away. Poor mother, whose hair was whitened with age and her many afflictions, whose step was slow and feeble, whose grief had already been too deep for tears, how could I tell her! How could she bear this added sorrow! "God help her," I groaned.

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"O Margaret," I said, for she was walking beside me, "how can we tell her these heavy tidings? You must tell her, for indeed I cannot."

"May God give me wisdom to break it to her gently," said Margaret.

Slowly and carefully she broke the sad news to our mother, who said not a word. Her face assumed a fixed, ghastly look. I feared the news would kill her. Soon her lips moved as if in prayer. Then I felt relieved; for was she not laying her burden at the feet of One who can sustain us in all our troubles?

We took the body of Steenie to Bessie McDougal's because it was Janet's home, and because we thought mother might be less affected by his death if she did not see him at first. She did not object to this arrangement; and she waited till evening before she asked to go and see him. Then, with more composure than I had anticipated, she made preparations to go to her son.

"I maun see my bairn now," she said. "I trow these auld limbs will not refuse to take me to him."

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"Who shall go with you, mother?" I asked.

"Margaret," she replied; for Margaret had remained with us through the day.

I was not sorry that she was chosen, for she had great fortitude and presence of mind; and I felt that I could not endure any more heart-harrowing scenes that day.

But mother controlled herself in a wonderful manner, Margaret said. She spoke comforting words to Janet, telling her that our compassionate Lord would help her to bear her burdens and sorrows. When the question of burial came up for consideration, mother was quick to express her wish. "He maun sleep near his auld hame," she said. "None o' my dead lie where I can look on their graves."

So we made him a grave in a nook of our own plot of ground; for we could scarcely feel that even a grave was sacred in the eyes of our enemies. Close by the grave runs the little burn that aye sings its song of praise in summer-time. We could see the mound from our window, and for years every change about it was noted. "The grass is green on Steenie's grave now; and there are bonnie wee flowers amang it," mother would say; or in winter, "The snow lies fresh on Steenie's grave the morn." And after she was gone other eyes watched it. I can see it to-day from my window as I write; for I live here still, the only one left of our once happy family. But I am not alone here; and to tell who bides with me will lead me back to my story.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE LAST DROP IN THE CUP OF BITTERNESS.

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We wanted Janet with us; but Bessie clung to her, and we did not insist on our wish, being loath to rob our neighbor of the comfort which Janet's company afforded her.

In less than half a twelvemonth after Steenie's death a son was born to perpetuate his name. Great was the mother's joy, and great was the joy of us all, though we rejoiced in trembling because of our persecutors. The bairn was christened Stephen, as may be supposed. He was a fair, fine child. Soon he laughed and crowed, quite unconscious that he had come into a world of trouble.

Sometimes, in my visits to Janet and the bairn, I saw Robert; and sometimes we were left alone together. His manner towards me was always gentle and considerate; and I felt drawn towards him, whether because of Steenie's dying injunction, or from some other cause, I cannot rightly tell. One evening as he accompanied me home, he said as we parted, "Effie, I wish we had lived in other times, or that we may outlive this evil time, that I may make known to you the dearest wish of my heart."

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He said no more; but he pressed my hand, and I heard a sigh as he turned away. I had for a long time known that he loved me, but I never appreciated till then the affection of his warm, honest heart. I have no doubt that if he had known the change in my feelings towards him he would have been encouraged to say more. But that was a long way back in the past, very long, it seems to me.

But time wore on. I kept myself always busy, for that is the best way to get through trouble. Besides there was need that I should be employed. I had an eye over Jamie's bairns, for their

mother was thronged with labors and cares. Her stout heart and ready hand had enough to do to keep above want. Many a garment did I make for them from those of the dead, who were now clad in purer robes. I had our own home to keep also, for mother was feeble; and, with all our other troubles, I had constantly to bear up under the pressure of poverty.

We were in this situation when Richie, whose health had gradually failed since his terrible captivity, took to his bed, never to rise again. This was in the spring of 1684, and before the heather bloomed he was laid to rest.

Death is always sad; but we who had witnessed so many deaths by the hand of man could not but feel that in Richie's case the sting had been less sharp. He had breathed his last peacefully in his bed; yet we knew that his end was brought on by the exposure in Edinburgh.

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Ellen came to us. She was now alone, her two children having died of fever a few months before their father's death. We welcomed her, for we had need to gather about us the few friends that were left us. Yet we could ill afford to feed another out of our scanty means. If Ellen had been like Margaret, she would have found a way to earn an honest penny herself. But there have always been differences in folk, and there always will be. "The ane can do, and the ither maun be done for; and we will not be hard on Ellen," said my mother. We had few of our kin left. She was company for us. At best, the days passed wearily, the evenings were dull and sad, and the nights often brought no sleep. We still lived in fear and dread, although we felt that our best had already been taken from us, and whatever could come to us now must be less than that which we had already suffered.

Our champions had become fewer, but they made up in bravery what they lacked in numbers. Doubtless they thought they would sell their lives as dearly as possible. Bessie McDougal often trembled for her son, and I will not deny that another did the same. Alas! I have to record that our worst fears were realized. He likewise was pierced by the enemy's bullet. I was now more than ever drawn towards his aged mother, for I felt that we had a common sorrow. I was near her as she stood over the cold clay of her son, and I slipped my hand in hers. She tightened her grasp, and turned and looked at me. "Puir Effie," said she, "your ain heart is sair, I mak nae doot."

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I answered with tears that I could no longer keep back.

Afterwards she told me all that Robert had said. "I will always love you because he loved you," she said, pressing me to her heart.

This is the last death of our friends that I have to record. The dreadful "killing time," as the last few and most bloody years of persecution were called, came at last to an end, and a brighter and better day dawned upon long-oppressed Scotland, thanks to the good Lord.

CHAPTER XII. PEACE.

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The persecution of our kirk lasted through the reigns of Charles II. and James II., a period of twenty-eight years. But the Lord gave us deliverance at last. James was driven from the throne in November, 1688, and liberty of conscience was proclaimed by his successor, King William.

It now remains for me to trace our way back to quiet industrial pursuits. This was no easy matter for us; for, setting aside the fact that sorrow had taken nearly all the heart out of us, it will be remembered that, while many of our neighbors had lost a son, a brother, or a father, we had lost nearly every male member of our family. And as for my nephew Jamie, his hands were full at home. How should we win our bread? It was a serious question; and for this cause we were glad to learn that Janet and her bairn were to be the sole heirs of Bessie McDougal. She had laid by a heavy purse of gold, the reward of long years of labor performed by herself and her husband. They had never a child but Robert, so they could well lay by; and by canny management she had contrived to save something from taxation and the troopers. Nor was she likely to use her savings in her old age, for no sooner was peace restored to the country than she again filled up her poultry-yard and bought cows, so that her butter, eggs, and fowls were sent to market as in the years before the troubles began.

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But with us it was very different. My father had accumulated very little, having had five bairns to clothe, feed, and educate. During the troubles we had labored constantly and practised every species of economy, but our purse was now empty. I could spin and weave, and that I did both early and late. But I do not think I could have kept even with the world if Ellen had not realized how matters stood with us and gone to her own kinsfolk. This was no small relief to us, for it not only made one less to provide for, but also made it possible for us to rent a room to a worthy woman who, like ourselves, had lost all her supporters in the evil times.

It was also Bessie's pleasure to send us many things, among which I well remember a fine brood of chickens. I was glad of these for mother's sake. She attended to them very gladly. She loved to watch the bonnie wee things and see them grow. The care of them kept her from always thinking of the past, so that they were a benefit to us in more ways than one.

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But mother's usual place was by the ingle. There she sat and knitted most of the day, and sometimes far into the night. There stood the stand upon which was her Bible, which she read frequently. Our life was free from disturbance; we gradually became accustomed to our lot, and even began to feel some small degree of comfort. There was, as it were, a faint misty light breaking over us. We began to notice the changes in nature. Morning and evening were not now as one to us. We greeted the coming of day with something of the old feeling; we were solemnized at nightfall, but no longer terrified. The Sabbath was now indeed a day of rest. We were no longer wandering over moor and glen, through summer's heat and winter's cold, to win our way to some remote place in order to hear the preached Word, or, when there was no preacher, to exhort and comfort one another; but we were gathered again in our own kirk, where we had all worshipped in our youth. On those peaceful Sabbaths I could forget the present and think gladly of our holy dead who had entered upon the never-ending Sabbath above.

Little by little much of the old glad life crept into the homes of our neighbors; but for myself I have known comparatively little of what the world calls happiness. I had scarcely passed childhood when my life was beclouded by the evil that pursued us until I reached middle age, at which time I was already longingly looking forward to death as a relief from life's sorrows and anxieties. Yet for my mother's sake, and for the dear ones that called me "Aunt Effie," I have ay prayed for strength to endure.

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There is one sorrow that I have not told in earthly ears. I never speak of Robert. I visit his grave alone. Sometimes I find the birds singing joyously above it; and though their glad song jars a little on my ear, I ever bid them sing on, for their music makes his resting-place more cheerful. I planted seeds and roots of flowering-plants on the grave so as to make the place bonnier, and also that I might pluck the blossoms that grew above him and wear them near my heart; for though this regard for him came to me late in life, it was none the less real and tender.

At Steenie's grave it was different. Mother, Janet, and I often sat around it. Janet needed not to hide her sorrow. She could mourn her dead in the presence of his mother and sister without reserve.

I scarcely knew how I passed my time some days. My fingers drew out the threads and my foot turned the wheel, but my mind was often far away, recalling the words and deeds of our happy dead. I remembered the look and tone of each. I was again a child standing beside my sister, who patiently combed and plaited my hair; I was at father's knee with my book; I was being borne in the arms of Jamie or Richie; I was playing with Steenie at the burn, or I was thinking of what happened long afterwards—thoughts that I cannot write. From these memories I would be roused by my mother's gentle call, "Effie, the fire is low and it is nearly time for the evening meal."

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Five years we two bided alone. Often, too often, we recounted our sorrows; but we aye took them to the Fountain-head of love and strength, and oftentimes we received "the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for heaviness." At the end of this time came a change.

Our dear old friend Bessie McDougal sickened. We often went to her, but we always found her wishes anticipated by the affectionate thoughtfulness and skilful hands of Janet. Indeed, she almost refused to share the care of the sick with any one. Not even after her own cheek grew pale with nightly watchings would she willingly give place to me. Bessie would sometimes tell her to rest herself; but as soon as Janet left the room the sick woman would weary for her.

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At length the end drew near. Mother was summoned in haste to her death-bed. The dying woman commended Janet to our care with as much concern and tenderness as if she were delivering an only daughter to a stranger. She forgot in her earnestness that Janet and her child already belonged to us.

"She has been like a daughter to me," she said. "She was the light of my puir hame; she comforted me in my last sad bereavement, although her ain great sorrow was heavy upon her. Her wee slender hands have ministered to my comfort in mony ways; she has been eyes and feet to me; her faith has strengthened my faith; she is in very truth the handmaid of the Lord. My deein' pillow wouldna be easy if I thought she wouldna hae freends when I am awa."

"Bessie dear, good neighbor Bessie," said my mother, "do you no remember that Janet is as dear to us as to you? Do you forget that she was wife to my ain Steenie, and that I have loved her long and well?"

"Oh, ay; it is enough; and do thou forgie what my anxious heart garred me say. Noo I dee content. I shall soon be wi' David. I hae ne'er forgotten his message to me, that we s'ould meet, though we s'ould gang hame by different rauds. He meant we s'ould leave this warld in different ways. He didna mean that we s'ouldna a' walk in the straight and narrow way by faith in the Son of God: na, na, David didna mean that, for there is nae ither way. If we seek to climb up some ither way, we shallna enter in. Thank God, we are a' in the richt way but the bairn; and surely the God o' his faithers willna forsake the little ane left to his care."

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When she felt that her last moments had come, she turned her eyes on Janet, saying feebly and brokenly, "Fare ye weel, my puir twice-smitten lamb. Dinna sorrow for me. Ye hae been a comfort to me; let that thought now comfort yoursel. Let the wee lad gie me a kiss."

Gradually her eyelids closed, and her lifeless form lay before us as if she had fallen into a peaceful slumber.

Janet and the bairn grieved for the good woman as it was meet they should, for she had been a good friend to them. I felt sad too; for since I had stood with her over the dead body of one who was dear to us both I had felt that she was more than a neighbor to me.

Janet no longer rented the place so long held by the McDougals. She came to us; and more of joy came with her and wee Steenie than I had ever thought would be our portion. The lad was growing up very like his father. I doubt not but mother and I would have spoiled him if Janet had not been as wise as she was good.

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CHAPTER XIII. CONCLUSION.

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I have written nothing of late about Margaret's children. You will remember that Jamie had a wish to preach the gospel. He did not change his purpose. The providence of God helped him wonderfully. Through the divine blessing on his own perseverance, and the kindness of his friends, a way was opened for the fulfilment of his wishes. And who, think you, bides now at the manse? Who, indeed, but the selfsame Jamie, now Rev. James Patterson! But I never cross the doorstone without thinking of our own gentle Mary, whose home it once was. Surely time has brought to us many changes. I am glad that mother lived to hear Jamie preach in our own kirk; no doubt it was like balm to her poor wounded heart.

Margaret's youngest bairn, John, is the schoolmaster; for we aye have a schoolmaster in our family. When he made it known that he wanted his grandfather's place, many voices cried, "Let him have it. Let us have a scion o' the warthy John Patterson, for we havena had his like since the good man's wark was stopped."

The four lassies, as they grew to womanhood, were settled in homes of their own. The oldest one, Christie, married a worthy farmer's son, one John McHardie. She lives in the house so long occupied by Bessie McDougal. It seems natural to me to go there, and I am glad it is Christie's home. Christie is just like my mother, for whom she was named. She puts every pennyworth to its best use; and she and her husband bid fair to do as well on the place as David McDougal and his wife did.

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The youngest lass, Maggie, married a good man with plenty of this world's gear, yet I doubt if Margaret was better pleased than she was with Christie's choice. John, Maggie's brother, often told her that her bonnie face would get her a fortune some day. A bonnie face she had, and still

has, and a good heart too, which is far better. She has never been puffed up on account of her beauty or her husband's riches; for she was well taught that true beauty is beauty of soul, and true riches the treasure laid up in heaven. It is with Maggie that Margaret now lives, though the other bairns are ever wanting their mother to bide a while with them; and so she often goes from one to another, loved and honored by all.

In Margaret's family we cannot fail to see that God has fulfilled his promise to the widow and the fatherless. True, they were not without their full share of hardships; but by God's grace they bore them submissively and bravely, and God exalted them in his own good time.

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I have to record but one other event—the death of my mother. It is just eleven years to-day since she passed away. It was like the falling to sleep of a wee bairn. She went with a smile on her face. I could not but wonder what made her smile. Was it joy that her long pilgrimage of more than ninety years was accomplished at last? Did she see some one on the other shore beckoning to her? We cannot know that she did; but we believe that the Christian, when he goes hence, is often cheered by some vision of God's own granting.

Mother's place by the ingle is left to me. Here I sit. I read the same Bible, and I am waiting for the same call. God grant it may be as gentle. I do not weary to go; for I am an honored inmate of the old home. My nephew is fond of his aunt Effie, and Janet is a sister indeed. Much good has come to me to make me forget the past, could it ever be forgotten. But I look for my purest and highest enjoyment in that world where I shall rejoin those who have passed on before.

It is not meet, it would not be wise, for me to trace all the events connected with our family in the last few years. It might not be amiss to say that Wilson, the man that put the match to Jamie's fingers, when he lay on his death-bed sent for the same Jamie to pray for the salvation of his soul. Truly, God's ways are wonderful.

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And now I have done with my story. It has given me a melancholy pleasure to write it. I think I shall not hope too much if I hope that all who read it may learn from it that when God suffers his children to be afflicted, he aye upholds them and gives them grace sufficient for their needs.

Sequel: by Christie Somerville

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CHAPTER XIV. THE PEN IN ANOTHER HAND.

Having come in possession of Effie Patterson's manuscript, which the reader has just been perusing in print, I, Christie Somerville, her grand-niece, deem that it would not be amiss to add something thereunto.

It is with profound respect that I call to remembrance my most worthy relative, who was a member of my father's family from my earliest recollections, and who died at an advanced age while I was still young. But I recollect her perfectly well, and I remember many things that she told me; for, like all aged persons, she loved to rehearse the events of her earlier years. Listening to her, I learned much of the history of that sad time when the spirit of persecution desolated Scotland and bereft us of so many of our kindred. I have also gathered from the conversation of my parents much of the story of her life, so that the contents of her manuscript are not entirely new to me; but they are none the less dear because of their familiarity. She lost the spirit of sadness apparent in her manuscript, and during the last years of her life she was cheerful, and always ready to encourage the desponding and assure them from her own experience that the Lord would bring them out of all their troubles, according to his promise. My parents held her in great veneration; and, remembering all she had suffered—her bereavements, her toils, her loneliness, and her noble endurance—they did all that they could to make her last days pleasant to her. She beguiled the years of old age with reading, and she took a lively interest in the current events of her time. I well remember her remark when we heard that King George I. had died in his carriage while travelling in Germany. "I have outlived seven sovereigns," said she. "It can scarcely be God's will that I should outlive another." And she did not. Death approached her very softly, and she passed away as gently and as peacefully as she had desired.

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She has told her story, and I thought it might be well to take it up where she left it, and trace the dealings of God's providence with us, her kinsfolk of later generations.

My father's name was Stephen Patterson. He was son of Janet McAdam, wife of Stephen Patterson, the martyr, as my aunt has recorded. To my parents were born two sons, Kenneth and Walter; but I was the only daughter. My brothers were older than I.

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Living as we did but two generations after our suffering kindred, it will not be accounted a strange thing that we were early filled with admiration for those who so stoutly resisted oppression. I well remember with what eagerness we gathered around Aunt Effie to hear from her lips stories of their seal and courage. She loved to see us manifest this interest, which assured her that we too would stand up in defence of our rights and privileges, should they ever

be assailed.

It is not my design, however, to dwell on anything she has written, or the time of which she wrote, but to speak of those who came after her, and endeavor to show that religion with our people was not a fitful, feeble flame, fanned and kindled only by persecution, but a steady fire, that has since lighted the rugged path of poverty and toil, as it illuminated the dungeons where our forefathers were incarcerated.

In my father's family we knew little of real poverty, for industry had brought back a degree of prosperity; but we all had to labor continually in order to keep the little property that was left to our grandmother by Bessie McDougal, as you will remember. But poverty was around us, even in families whose ancestors had been wealthy and titled. We were early taught to think of those poorer than ourselves; nor were we taught by precept alone, but by example as well. I remember that, at the time when the husbandmen were to cast in the seed, many a measure of grain was given from our own store; for grandmother thought that if folk could not get wherewith to sow, they surely could not reap. It was her delight to give, and she frequently stood by and added another handful after father had given all he thought he could spare. What a grandmother she was! I cannot adequately describe her. One must have known her personally to be able to form a correct idea of her. She was remarkable for sweetness of disposition, kindness, and dignity of manner, and her earnest piety was known of all. The Bible was her constant study. She believed it with the heart as well as with the head, and trusted its promises with simple childlike faith. In all her trials she relied on a present Saviour, and she brought this Saviour so near to us that we almost felt his presence. She had proved him in darker hours than we had ever known, and her faith was immovable. She endeavored to inspire us with her own faith and trust.

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"You must know, my dear bairns," she said to us one Sabbath afternoon, "that the Lord Jesus has said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' Remember that, 'never leave thee nor forsake thee;' no, not for one wee moment. He leads us with his hand; he guides us with his eye; he calls us by name, and gives us gifts. The best gift, forbye the gift of eternal life, is that of peace. We are not promised rest in this world; but we are promised peace, and that brings us all the rest we need. We shall have rest after a while, when our work in this world is all done. The Lord could give us wealth and free us from toil if it would be good for us; but he kens better. He said, 'Not as the world giveth give I unto you.' He kens that hardships and trials are good for us; and as a wise father chastises his children, so we are chastised by our Heavenly Father, and we must aye trust that it is for our good."

Poor Kenneth! he found it hard, even in her day, to believe that all was ordered for his good. Only a few days after she had thus talked with us Kenneth was seeking a stray lamb, and, leaping a wall in his haste, he did not quite clear it, but fell, and a heavy stone fell with him and broke his leg. He rolled away the stone, but he could not win his way home. He had to lie there on the grass and wait for some one to come seeking him; and there father found him two hours later. A surgeon was immediately sent for, but he was long in coming; and whether he did not rightly understand his business, or what was the cause, I cannot say, but the limb did not mend well, and the poor lad halted ever after. He took this sorely to heart, and no one could still his sad complainings but grandmother. As I think of it now I do not wonder at his murmurings—so young and full of life, to be maimed before he had reached the stature of manhood. Only the grace of God can enable us to say under such trials, "Thy holy will be done." If this trouble, sore as it was, had been all that was meted out to us, we still would have been able to favor the lad, and so try to make his burden lighter. But in the midst of harvest the same year father was stricken with palsy, and we thought his hour had come. He lingered helpless, and at last began slowly to recover; but he never was strong on his feet again, and never had the full use of his right arm. With these two afflictions our worldly prospects seemed sadly blighted.

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Mother was, up to this time, but a gentle, clinging woman; but troubles brought into action her hidden power and courage, and from being consoled under light trials and difficulties she became consoler to us all. Of this we had great need; for grandmother, who always sought to interpret the dark, mysterious providences of God as real blessings, was taken from us by death. Father grieved sorely for grandmother, and so did we all. Her strength was hardly abated, and her heart was still young. She had a kindly and a comforting word for every one who needed it, and she was sadly missed by many besides ourselves. But the change in mother helped us all, and father often said, "Agnes, what should we do in all our difficulties without your strength and courage? The more we are cast down, the more you lift us up and the stronger you seem."

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Walter, wee man, buckled to the work right earnestly. But his strength was small, and mother and I wrought in the field many a day during haying and harvest. Many kinds of work were too heavy for us, and as the years went by we were obliged to pay out many pounds for help, and this expense ate sorely into the profits of the harvest. But we had butter and cheese to sell, and our sheep furnished us much of our clothing, so that our expenses were small, and, with the blessing of God, we were kept from want. Kenneth did what he could, and was never idle; but we kept him in school as much as we could, that he might be able to earn his bread with his head and his fingers and not with his bodily strength. Father oftentimes essayed to put in the sickle, but was as often forced to yield. But, thanks to God, naught happened to Walter, and after a few years he was able to stand master of the work himself; and father and Kenneth learned the lesson, often so hard to learn, that they must trust their Leader, though they cannot see the way in which they are led.

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CHAPTER XV. A VISIT TO AUNT MARGARET.

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Before I tell you more about my father's family I will tell you about some other persons of whom Aunt Effie wrote. It seems to me that you will wish to know if Margaret, my great-aunt, had as peaceful and as happy an old age as was predicted for her. She was, as you will remember, wife to James Patterson, who fell at Bothwell Bridge. I shall be right glad to tell you about her, for I remember her well. She lived to be very old, and was hale and hearty up to the time of her last sickness. Her look was always so cheerful that I might almost say she wore a perpetual smile. She was plump and rosy too, and was as nice and comfortable a body as you would wish to look at. A visit to Aunt Margaret was a source of pleasure to us all.

One afternoon when father was feeling poorly and discouraged, for it seemed that all was going wrong with us, he said to mother, "Well, Agnes, I think I'll away to Aunt Margaret's; it may do me good."

"That it will," replied my mother. "But you maun take Christie with you, as you are no well."

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I was right glad to hear that, and I hastened to make myself ready. It was in the spring-time; the hillocks were fresh and green, and even the crags were flecked with spots of vegetation. Sheep were cropping the tender grass on the uplands, and cattle were browsing in the underwood. Birds were flitting about and singing for joy as they busied themselves with providing for their tender young. The day and the season were so delightful that we thought nothing of the distance, and were surprised to find ourselves so soon at Aunt Margaret's cottage. The walk did father good, and he scarcely felt fatigue. Aunt Margaret was right glad to see us. She had always felt a tenderness for my father, and since his affliction came upon him she had done all she could to cheer him and make his burden less heavy.

"Something told me you would come to-day, Steenie," said she. "I said to Rachel this morning, 'The day is so fine I think Steenie will be here.' You did well to bring Christie. I wish Agnes had come too." And so she continued with her pleasant welcome and her cheerful chat, and father soon forgot his troubles.

Aunt Margaret's son John, the schoolmaster, always lived with his mother. His wife, Rachel, was a quiet body. She had no children, so that there were no playmates for me; but still I liked to go there, though to this day I can scarcely tell why. I think it was chiefly on account of the beautiful charm that invests most children, and makes them think their kinsfolk the best and loveliest people in the world. It must also have been partly on Cousin John's account. He always exerted himself to amuse children; perhaps because he had none of his own he took more notice of other people's; at any rate, he was very agreeable, and could be very amusing when he felt like it.

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John made father laugh many times that afternoon. I suppose he was purposely funny in order to cheer my father and hearten him up a bit. His efforts had the desired effect, for father told John that an hour in his company was better than a dose of medicine. But this same cousin was grave too at times; and none took the good Book in a more reverential manner than did he, and few in prayer seemed to approach so near the throne of Divine Grace.

We stayed to break bread with our aunt that day. Many a daintier supper may have been gotten on the board, but I trow none better or more wholesome.

Aunt Margaret's cordial welcome and kind words did father good, and he left the house with a lighter heart than he had brought to it.

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The dear old lady accompanied us to the gate and took leave of us there.

"Good night to you, Steenie; and good night to you, hinny; and come again soon," said she, as we left.

I looked back and saw her going to the poultry-yard to see that all was right there.

"Old age is not to be dreaded when one can be so blessed, so cheerful, and so helpful," remarked my father. "Christie, you maun make a woman like Aunt Margaret, and like your grandmother, whose blessed memory rests in the hearts of many people."

He pressed my hand as he said this, and I remember well I thought within myself, "I will try to be like them."

"Well, Stephen, you look quite cheered up again," said my mother, as we reached home.

"Aunt Margaret aye cheers a body," he replied, and he continued to talk more cheerfully than he had done for a long time. Mother had to remind him that he was weary with his walk and that it was time to seek rest in sleep. She bid Walter bring the Book to Kenneth, that he might read instead of his father.

"Read the hundred and forty-fifth Psalm," said my father.

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Kenneth was a good reader, and the words seemed good and gracious even to me. When we had all been commended to God and pardon had been asked for all our transgressions, we sought our pillows, all of us feeling, no doubt, as did God's servant of old when he said, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only, makest me to dwell in safety."

CHAPTER XVI. A MORNING AT THE MANSE.

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I have a mind to take my reader next to the manse, where my Cousin James lives in peace, and, I might add, plenty; for although his fifty pounds a year would be considered by some folk a mere trifle, it suffices for his wants and leaves something forbye to give to the poor. No suppliant for charity goes from his door without a few pence to gladden his heart; and if the need be great, the pence are sometimes held back and shillings take their place. To be sure, there are many in the parish who bring him gifts several times a year. We ourselves often carry our cousin James such things as we can spare.

I remember in particular one lovely summer morning, when Walter and I were small, my mother sent us to the manse with a little gift. Walter carried a leg of mutton and I a bit of cheese and a bottle of cream. We made a merry time of it, for neither of us minded our burdens, and we laughed and chatted all the way. I doubt if the plover that was wading in the stream was happier or more care-free than were we. Walter had a bonnie face, though it was a bit sun-browned; but his dark hair set it off finely. I remember he said to me, when we had almost reached the manse, "You must quiet down now, Christie, for you have kept your mouth stretched frae ear to ear the hail morn."

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"I could say as much for yourself," I replied. Whereupon he laughed again, showing two rows of fine teeth.

"Well," said he, "let us laugh while we may. We will have to sober down soon enough; leastways that seems to be the way it goes with poor folk. It is work, work, frae year's end to year's end."

"What is that you are saying, my lad?" asked the minister, coming from behind the hedgerow and starting up the path with us.

"I was but saying that poor folk maun work and aye keep at it," replied Walter, the color rising to his cheeks.

"And do you not like work, my wee man?" asked he, smiling.

"Ay, I like it well enough; but sometimes it seems a bit hard to have all work and no play. I suppose it maun be right or it wouldna be so ordered," said Walter, for he had been well taught that all the arrangements of Providence are wise and good.

"Yes, Walter, it must be right; and you must not be discouraged because you have been put into the harness younger than most lads. You have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helpful, and there is a comfort in that. It is noble to labor; it is ignoble to be idle."

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He had now reached his own door, and we followed him in.

"Here is a bit of meat mother sent," said Walter. "And here is a small cheese and some cream," said I.

"Thank you, my dears. Your mother is very kind. I am fond of Cousin Agnes' cheese."

Stepping to the door of the pleasant sitting-room, he spoke to his wife: "Ellen, here is company for you."

She came to greet us, and asked us to go with her. But when we were within the room that to us seemed so grand we felt a little embarrassed.

"If I had kenned they would bring us into this bonnie room," said Walter in an undertone, "I would have put on my Sunday clothes."

"And I too," I said, "would have put on my print gown and a ribbon on my braids."

As we finished speaking the minister and his wife returned with Jeannie, their little lame daughter. Jeannie was almost as old as I was, being ten, while I was eleven; but she was pale and sickly-looking. Her arms and hands were very thin. I looked at my own plump, brown hands; the contrast was great. I believe Jeannie's mother observed the contrast too, for she looked from Jeannie to me, and I heard her sigh. I went to Jeannie and talked to her. The mother's eyes rested on us all the time, as if her little daughter was too frail and too precious to be lost from view a single moment. Cousin Ellen was a lovely lady, just in the prime of life; but her husband was well on in years. She was his second wife and the mother of two children. Alec, her son, then fifteen years old, was a pleasant lad, and my brothers were very fond of him. Walter went into the garden to find him, and both soon came in. Alec brought a basket of fine cherries. I ate too many of them to be genteel, I fear; but we had none at home, and it was not easy to restrain my childish appetite.

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The minister took us into his study. I was astonished to see so many books. I did not know at that time that one person ever possessed so many. I looked at them a long time, for even then I liked books. I remember that I thought there could be no better man than our minister, and no place bonnier than the manse.

Walter and I were thinking of going home when Alan, the son of the first wife, drove up to the

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door with his wife and child.

"We maun go home now," said Walter; but I had caught sight of the wee one, and he could not persuade me to go.

I soon managed to get the bairn in my arms, and, forgetting myself, I was talking to it as I had heard others talking to infants. When I looked up Alan was laughing at me.

"What an old-fashioned child you are, Christie," said he.

"Everybody tells me so," said I, slightly displeased.

"I like you all the better for your quaint ways," said he, still smiling.

Walter was becoming very uneasy, I could see that; so I carried the bairn to Alan, for I did not feel acquainted with his wife, and we started for home.

"Now, my lass," said Walter, when we had but gotten out of hearing of the manse, "I should not wonder if the taws would be taken down. The hail morn is gone, and not a weed pulled frae the garden, nor anything else done."

I was a little uneasy, and was pondering in my mind what I should say in self-defence and still adhere to the truth, for I knew well it was my fault that we had stayed away the last hour or more. We returned less merry than we went, I can assure you. Finally I remembered that the minister had said many good things to us, and asked us questions from the Bible, and that we had answered very well, the minister had said so. "Children, I am glad to know that you have been so well taught," he said. "Although your parents have so many things to divide their attention and distract their thoughts, they have not failed to instruct you out of the Book that maketh wise unto salvation."

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I thought if mother was too hard on me I would turn this to good account, for she aye liked to have us get religious instruction. When we had nearly reached home I began to lag behind, feeling in no hurry to hear what would be said to me. Walter hastened to the garden, took up the hoe, and began to work very fast. Just then mother came to the door.

"So, you are come at last! What has kept you the hail morn?"

"Nothing in particular," I replied, quickening my steps, "only the minister's folk were so kind, and it was such a bonnie place that I liked well to stay."

I looked into her face as I spoke the whole truth, but I feared so poor an excuse might cause me to be punished. To my surprise she answered without sternness, and with a perceptible touch of tenderness,

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"I am glad ye have had a pleasant morning, puir wee lass. I was vexed with you for staying away, for I was pressed with work; but I will no chide you; it is little enough pleasure that you have."

"Is anything amiss?" I asked, touched by her unusual manner.

"Nae, I was but thinking how muckle better chance some children have than others. It is wrong, I make nae doubt, to feel so, but whiles I canna help it. It grieves me sairly that I canna let ye gang to your cousin John's school, as ye should; but I canna spare ye."

"I can read very well now, mother," said I, "and I can repeat a score of the Psalms and answer many of the Bible questions. Walter and I did it the morn. The minister took us into his study and talked with us seriously. He asked us many questions, and we answered right well, for he said so. But Walter said it was Samson who slew Goliath. I shook my head. 'Who was it, Christie?' asked the minister. 'David,' I replied. 'You are right,' said he. 'It is no wonder that Walter thought Samson maun hae killed the great giant,' said I, feeling sorry for Walter. The minister smiled and went on with his questions. Alas! I have to tell that my own time came next; for when he asked me who was taken up in a chariot of fire, I answered, 'Ezekiel.' Walter was even with me then, for he quickly answered, 'Elijah.' I felt ashamed. But mother," said I, "did not the minister read Sunday morning about Ezekiel and wheels and fire?"

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"Yes, Christie," said she; "you will find that in the tenth chapter of Ezekiel; but it doesna say he went up in a chariot of fire. I hope you made no more mistakes."

"No more after that, and many questions he asked us," I replied.

"Ye hae done very well," said she, heaving a sigh of relief; "some other day ye may go again."

As soon as I had done my work in the house I hurried out to weed the garden. I told Walter that the taws was likely to hang idle on the peg, and that mother was o'er good. I did not know why she seemed to pity us, for she had always told us that work was good for every one; but I now know that she was sorry there was not a little more pleasure and innocent childish enjoyment in our young lives, for she well knew that the years would bring still more care and burdens still more heavy.

AT COUSIN CHRISTIE'S.

Aunt Effie wrote, as you will remember, that Aunt Margaret's daughter, Christie, and her husband made their home where David and Bessie McDougal had so long lived; and she said, too, that they would be like to prosper. If they have not prospered I am no judge. John McHardie has a way of getting pennies together that few have; and he is a God-fearing and God-serving man too, and he gives liberally to the kirk. As for Christie, you would not find her like for strong sense and goodness among a score of women. They have raised a large family—four lads and five lassies; and, although they were all brought up to work hard, they were the most mirthful of all the cousins. The lads whistled merrily as they drove the team to the field, and the lassies sang at the wheel. In the evening they found something to do with their hands, while they cracked innocent jokes or slyly speired at each other about the neighboring lads and lassies. They were so good-natured with it all that there was much laughing, but no ill-temper.

I went there to spend the day one Saturday when I was about thirteen years of age. It was unusual for me to have a day to myself; but I worked well all the morning that I might leave as little as possible for mother to do. I then made myself tidy, and took the path along the western brae, for it was more pleasant than the dusty road, and I liked to see the bonnie things that grew in the shade of the coppice.

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It was almost dinner-time when I arrived, and preparations were going on for that meal. Over the fire hung a large kettle of barley soup; in a corner of the fireplace sat the bake-kettle, on the cover of which Christie was heaping glowing embers as I entered; before the fire were oaten cakes set up to bake, for Sunday must be provided for, and the family were blessed with good appetites.

Christie gave me hearty greeting and inquired after father and mother. Just then Ellen, her daughter, came in with a basket of eggs. "The black hen has a notion to set," she was saying, when she saw me, and her face broke into smiles. She was a bonnie lass, just turned fourteen. She and two lads were all that were left at home, the rest having married or gone out into the world to seek their fortune.

In the middle of the afternoon it began to rain, and darkness came early, so that I was obliged to spend the night with them. A fire made the little room cheerful, and we were all as merry as we could wish. Christie sat by the candle finishing the week's sewing, and her husband sat by the fire, falling asleep now and then, for he had been chilled by the rain.

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The evening was half spent when the door opened and Sandy McHardie, the eldest son, came in.

"Weel, Sandy, what brings ye out on sic a night?" said his mother.

"Ye may well say 'sic a night,' for if I hadna taen my plaid I would hae been wet to the skin."

"Wha is here?" asked his father, rousing from sleep.

"Naebody but Sandy, father. I am come to hae a talk wi' you. And I maun tell you before I forget it—for I hae anither trouble on my mind—that the brown mare has a swelling on her knee, and I want you to come the morrow morn, if it is Sunday, and look at it, for it would be a wark o' mercy to help the puir faithful beast."

"There'll be nae need o' that, Sandy. I think it maun be the same as ailed the black horse. I'll gie you a bottle o' the wash that cured him; I am never without it sin' that time."

"I'll try it; but if it graws waur instead o' better I'll send you word, for I dinna want anything to happen to that beast. Now for something mair. My sheep got into Jock Wilson's field, and it's nae wonder, for he hasna a wa' that would keep out the maist orderly sheep in a' Scotland. Weel, what did he do but set that savage beast o' his on them, and ane o' the ewes was sae badly torn wi' his ugly teeth that I had to kill her at ance, and anither broke her leg. Now I ca' that vera unneeborly, to say the least o' it; and I am that angry I could a'maist set sic a beast on himsel, the scoundrel! There isna an honest hair on his heid, nor on his father's before him, nor yet on his grandfather's, the auld traitor, wha for filthy lucre turned foe to his countrymen, and pit thae accursed instruments o' torture to his ain neebors!"

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Here he paused to take breath.

"Mother," said Ellen softly, "was he no the ane wha put the match to Uncle Jamie's fingers?"

Her mother nodded in the affirmative.

"There isna need to be sae muckle heated aboot it, Sandy," said his father. "It is nae wonder ye are vexed, but ye ken that will do nae gude. How is your ain part o' the wa'?"

"It couldna be better. That is the vexing part o' the matter. He kens weel I hae nae ither place to keep my sheep. Now what is to be dune aboot it?"

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"Just speak to the laird aboot it. Jock is afeared o' him if he isna o' you; and if he doesna gang right he'll soon be shifted frae his bonnie cot and set doon by the wayside, for a' Laird Graham will care."

"Sure enough. I was that angry I couldna think sae far."

"Now let me say a word, Sandy," said his mother. "If ye had minded the gude Ward ye wouldna hae let the sun go down on your wrath; ye would hae thought yoursel about laying the matter before your uncle. Ye maun be slow to wrath, as the apostle James has written."

"Weel, mother, I hae been slow to speak; leastways I didna gang to him as I had a mind to do. So ye see I hae heeded part o' the injunction, at ony rate."

"Ye hae dune weel in that, Sandy. Thae Wilsons are as they are, and the less ye hae to do wi' them, the better."

"Ye are right there, mother. I wish the hail boodle o' them could be set across the North Sea into another land than Scotland!"

"O Sandy, we can bring nae gude feeling into our hearts by cherishing ill-will towards ony human creature. We maun a' hae mair patience. Alas! I fear nane o' us are like the meek and gentle Maister. Compose yoursel noo, Sandy, and get your mind better prepared for the service o' the Lord's house on the morrow."

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"I suppose ye killed baith the ewes," said the father.

"That I did. I could do nae less."

"I'll tak ane o' them; the ither ye can mak use o'. On Monday I'll ride over and see the laird, and I think ye'll hae nae mair trouble wi' your neebor on that score, and there'll be nae real loss after a'."

"I canna quite say that," replied Sandy. "They were fine ewes, o' a choice breed. I wouldna set the value o' twa ither sheep anent them as a fitting recompense."

"Weel, it is bad enough, Sandy; but say nae mair about it. I'll gie ye twa bonnie lambs in their place. Peace is muckle better than discord among neebors."

Sandy rose to go.

"Tak your faither's plaid," said his mother; "your ain is no dry yet."

Sandy opened the door. "The rain has abated," said he. "I need nae plaid at all. Gude night to ye all." Then recollecting himself, he paused to say, "Tell Stephen's lass to come over wi' her parents and visit us. I want Stephen and Agnes to see how we are making out on the wee place."

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It was late bedtime when Sandy left. John McHardie took the Book of all books, and with solemn voice read the thirty-fourth Psalm. Then he made a lengthy prayer, in which he thanked God for the blessings of the week just past, and asked that an especial blessing might attend the labors of God's servants on the morrow. After worship all retired. I was both sleepy and weary, and was soon lost in slumber. That was my first night from home.

When I awoke in the morning I could not for a moment remember where I was. Then all came back to me. Ellen had already risen. I rose and looked out of the window. It was a bright, bonnie morn. I looked up at the blue sky, then down at the green earth; everything looked fresh, and the air was sweet. All was so still and peaceful that I thought the Sabbath had a calmness of its own, and to this day I fancy that it has.

I went with my cousins to the kirk, and from there I went home. I had been gone but a short time, but I was glad to be again under the home-roof.

CHAPTER XVIII. GRAHAM PLACE.

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The following week Laird Graham came to see about Sandy's difficulty with his neighbor, and he brought his wife to our house. It was two or three years since they had been to see us.

The laird took a great liking to Kenneth, who was at that time eighteen years of age, and a fine lad he was; saving his lameness, no bonnier young man was in the whole country-side. The lad's conversation showed so much good sense that our kinsman wanted him to go and live with him, and he spoke to us about it.

"I have need of some one like Kenneth," said he. "I was thinking of one of Christie's lads; but they are strong and can labor in the field, while Kenneth should have some easier way to earn his bread. Davie is but poorly, and he is worse since Katie married and went away. I think his loneliness wears on him. Kenneth would be a companion for him; and as he is good at figures, he could keep my accounts and look after things when I am away. I will do well by the lad, and he will have no hard work."

"Thank you for your kind offer," said my father. "If the lad wants to go I cannot stand in his way."

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Kenneth was glad of so good a chance to begin his way in the world, and at once accepted the opportunity. The separation caused sadness; but we consoled ourselves with the thought that he would not be far from us.

Thus Kenneth was provided with a good home among his own kin, and a chance to see more of the world and do better than he could in our humbler home and sphere. He could also help us more with his wages than he could with his work. We had need of his help, for father's strength failed every year, and at that time his limbs were so palsied that he could scarcely walk. He was feeble, and at times greatly suffered. We spent a great deal with doctors; but he became worse instead of better.

Three years after Kenneth went away came a summer long to be remembered by us all. Mother sickened, and for many weeks the angel of death seemed hovering over us. Then we were indeed troubled. Father's anxiety increased his weakness, and we thought we should lose both father and mother. I was just turned sixteen, and I did my best that mother should have no cause to worry about the work. Walter and I watched anxiously for signs of returning health, but they were long in coming. Everything was changing without. The summer sun was fast maturing grain and fruit; but still she, who had been wont to admire the one and pluck the other, lay on her bed of languishing. Wearisome days were these to us all. I was determined not to yield to fatigue; but tired nature could not be wholly overruled by force of will. Many times when, at a late hour, I sought my bed, my limbs almost refused to carry me to it. But the darkest night must be followed by the dawn; and so, too, the morn of hope dawned for us—mother recovered. Then it was first noticed that I was worn and needed rest. "Poor lass!" said my mother, "as soon as I get my strength you must have a play-spell."

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Kenneth had driven over many times to see his mother; twice Cousin Margaret came with him. The last time she came she found mother better; and noticing that I was pale and worn, she proposed that I should go to her house and rest a week or two. "As soon as you are strong I will send Kenneth for her, and you maunna refuse me, Cousin Agnes," she said.

I scarcely knew whether I was glad or sorry to go. I was to have a new gown, and a bonnie one too; mother said it was but right. I remember that all the silver we could gather on a market was spent to make me ready. When at last the day came and I rode away with Kenneth, I anticipated scarcely more pleasure than homesickness. I think I should have been frightened out of the visit altogether if I had known I was to meet there one who was destined to be my companion through life. But so it was, for there I first saw James Somerville, whose name I now bear.

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He was a nephew of the laird, and was spending a few weeks there before he should recommence his studies—for he was studying for the ministry. He was a tall, handsome youth, with fine brown eyes. We became acquainted, of course; and I wondered that he was so well pleased with me, for I was but a bashful girl, and among so many strange people I was more shy than ever. But he had a way of talking to me that put me at my ease, and I quite forgot that he was so recently unknown to me. I met many strangers, and there were many diversions; but in them all I often found myself thinking of the fine brown eyes—far oftener than I thought of Kenneth or the dear ones I had left at home.

Ten days passed rapidly. There was riding and driving, coming and going, and more stir than I had ever seen in all my life. My visit, that I thought might be tedious, ended too soon. Two hours' ride with Kenneth brought me again to our cottage. I am ashamed to write that to me it looked plain and small, and that I felt jealous of Kenneth, who enjoyed all the privileges of the laird's own family. But I soon put such thoughts away, and hurried within to greet my good, kind mother who had spared me so many days. Father and Walter seemed dearer for my short absence. But the quiet of my life had been disturbed. It was as when one casts a rock into the calm bosom of a little lake; it sinks, but that is not all. It sets wee waves in motion, and they widen and widen in ever-increasing circles, and stop not till they reach the shore. So it is with many of the seeming unimportant events of life.

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CHAPTER XIX.

THE OLD HOME AND THE NEW.

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My readers will be ready to believe me when I tell them that after this I often found myself dreaming of the future, and wondering what it had in store for me. I had plenty to do, so that my hands were not idle while my fancy roamed at times unchecked. I did not feel as care-free as I had done; but life possessed a charm which I had never known before. I was no longer a child, and I put away childish things and thoughts. I determined to make the most of the few advantages which our limited circumstances would allow. I worked early and late that I might attend the school. I paid more attention to my appearance than I had been wont to do. My hair, which was heavy and often neglected, received as much care on a week-day as on Sunday. It became darker and more glossy. Walter often complimented me on my improvement; but I am free to say it was not for Walter's sake that I was thus mindful of my looks.

Nor was this all. Whatever I did I strove to do in the best manner. My parents seemed never to weary of commending me. Life was very pleasant to me at that time. We were a little above want, and I sometimes had a few shillings to spend for some article of dress not exactly necessary, but pleasing to a young maid's fancy. My father's feebleness was the only drawback to our enjoyment—and that we had accepted as one of the allotments of Providence.

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Alas, this world is a changeful place! One tastes of joy, and then the cup of sorrow is put to his

lips. When I was eighteen my father left us for the better world. That he exchanged earthly pain for eternal happiness we never doubted. His dear life, especially in his last years, was a continual demonstration of the power of divine grace. Oh, it is a bonnie thing and a blessed thing, this walking with God! We may well say "the beauty of holiness," for it has a beauty all its own. The world may turn its frown upon the child of God, but he is undaunted; adversity may scatter its hoar-frosts upon him, but he still stands forth in all the freshness of perennial life; sickness may enervate the body, but the spiritual nature grows stronger as it nears the heavenly haven; friends may forsake and foes may hate, but if he is firmly planted in the kingdom of grace he remains unmoved by either. "Nothing can separate us from the love of God." It is this love that strengthens and beautifies the soul which is the real life of the Christian.

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Two years passed by and brought no marked changes. At the end of that time the aged James Patterson resigned his ministry. With advancing years his locks have grown whiter, his step slower, and his strength has visibly failed. He has passed the bounds of man's allotted days upon the earth, and now, tenderly cared for by his son Alan, under whose roof he and his wife find a hearty welcome, he calmly awaits the call to come up higher.

When our aged relative and beloved pastor laid aside his robe of office and no longer served in the Lord's house, James Somerville, my own betrothed, was called to fill the vacant place. In my heart there was joy, for I should not now be separated from my mother and the dear friends and scenes of my youth. One month after he was called among us I became his wife; and now for three happy years the visit to Graham Place has never been regretted by the mistress of the manse.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HONEST WULLIE; AND EFFIE PATTERSON'S STORY ***

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