A

SON OF THE SOIL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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A SON OF THE SOIL.

CHAPTER I.

"I SAY, you boy, it always rains here, doesn't it?—or 'whiles snaws'—as the aborigines say. You're a native, ar'nt you? When do you think the rain will go off?—do you ever have any fine weather here? I don't see the good of a fine country when it rains for ever and ever! What do you do with yourselves, you people, all the year round in such a melancholy place?"

"You see we know no better"—said the farmer of Ramore, who came in at this moment to the porch of his house, where the young gentleman was standing, confronted by young Colin, who would have exploded in boyish rage before now, if he had not been restrained by the knowledge that his mother was within hearing—"and, wet or dry, the country-side comes natural to them it belongs to. If it werena for a twinge o' the rheumatics noo and then—and my lads are ower young for that—it's a grand country. If it's nae great comfort to the purse, it's aye a pleasure to the e'e. Come in to the fire, and take a seat till the rain blows by. *My* lads," said Colin of Ramore, with a twinkle of approbation in his eye, "take little heed whether it's rain or shine."

"I'm of a different opinion," said the stranger, "I don't like walking up to the ankles in those filthy roads." He was a

boy of fifteen or so, the same age as young Colin, who stood opposite him breathing hard with opposition and natural enmity; but the smart Etonian considered himself much more a man of the world and of experience than Colin the elder, and looked on the boy with calm contempt. "I'll be glad to dry my boots if you'll let me," he said, holding up a foot which beside young Colin's sturdy hoof looked preternaturally small and dainty.

"A fit like a lassie's!" the country boy said to himself with responsive disdain. Young Colin laughed half aloud as his natural enemy followed his father into the house.

"He's feared to wet his feet," said the lad, with a chuckle of mockery, holding forth his own, which to his consciousness were never dry. Any moralist, who had happened to be at hand, might have suggested to Colin that a faculty for acquiring and keeping up wet feet during every hour of the twenty-four which he did not spend in bed was no great matter to brag of: but then moralists did not flourish at Ramore. The boy made a rush out through the soft-falling incessant rain, dashed down upon the shingly beach with an impetuosity which dispersed the wet pebbles on all sides of him, and jumping into the boat, pushed out upon the loch, not for any particular purpose, but to relieve a little his indignation and boyish discomfiture. The boat was clumsy enough, and young Colin's "style" in rowing was not of a high order, but it caught the quick eye of the Eton lad, as he glanced out from the window.

"That fellow can row," he said to himself, but aloud, with the *nonchalance* of his race, as he went forward, passing the great cradle which stood on one side of the fire, to the chair which the farmer's wife had placed for him. She received with many kindly homely invitations and welcomes the serene young potentate as he approached her fireside throne.

"Come awa—come in to the fire. The roads are past speaking

o' in this soft weather. Maybe the young gentleman would like to change his feet," said the soft-voiced woman, who sat in a wicker-work easy chair, with a very small baby, and cheeks still pale from its recent arrival. She had soft, dark, beaming eyes, and the softest pink flush coming and going over her face, and was wrapped in a shawl, and evidently considered an invalid—which, for the mother of five or six children, and the mistress of Ramore Farm, was an honourable but inconvenient luxury. "I could bring you a pair of my Colin's stockings in a moment. I dare say they're about your size—or if you would like to gang ben the house into the spare room, and change them——"

"Oh, thanks; but there is no need for that," said the visitor, with a slight blush, being conscious, as even an Eton boy could not help being, of the humorous observation of the farmer, who had come in behind him, and in whose eyes it was evident the experienced "man" of the fifth form was a less sublime personage than he gave himself credit for being. "I am living down at the Castle," he added, hastily; "I lost my way on the hills, and got dreadfully wet; otherwise I don't mind the rain." And he held the dainty boots, which steamed in the heat, to the fire.

"But you maunna gang out to the hills in such slight things again," said Mrs. Campbell, looking at them compassionately; "I'll get you a pair of my Colin's strong shoes and stockings that'll keep your feet warm. I'll just lay the wean in the cradle, and you can slip them off the time I'm away," said the good woman, with a passing thought for the boy's bashfulness. But the farmer caught her by the arm and kept her in her chair.

"I suppose there's mair folk than you about the house, Jeannie?" said her husband, "though you're so positive about doing everything yoursel'. I'll tell the lass; and I advise you, young gentleman, not to be shamefaced, but take the wife's advice. It's a great quality o' hers to ken what's good for other folk."

"I ken by mysel'," said the gentle-voiced wife, with a smile —and she got up and went softly to the window, while the young stranger took her counsel. "There's Colin out in the boat again, in a perfect pour of rain," she said to herself, with a gentle sigh—"he'll get his death o' cauld; but, to be sure, if he had been to get his death that gate, it would have come afore now. There's a great deal of rain in this country, you'll be thinking? —a' the strangers say sae; but I canna see that they bide away for a' that, though they're aye grumbling. And if you're fond o' the hills, you'll get reconciled to the rain. I've seen mony an afternoon when there was scarce an hour without two or three rainbows, and the mist liftin' and droppin' again, as if it was set to music. I canna say I have any experience mysel', but so far as ane can imagine, a clear sky and a shining sun, day after day, would be awfu' monotonous—like a face wi' a set smile. I tell the bairns it's as guid as a fairy-tale to watch the clouds—and it's no common sunshine when it does come, but a kind o' wistful light, as if he couldna tell whether he ever might see you again; but it's awfu' when the crops are out, as they are the noo —the Lord forgive me for speaking as if I liked the rain!"

And by this time her boy-visitor, having succeeded, much to his comfort and disgust, in replacing his wet *chaussures* by Colin's dry, warm stockings and monstrous shoes, Mrs. Campbell came back to her seat and lifted her baby again on her knee. The baby was of angelic disposition, and perfectly disposed to make itself comfortable in its cradle, but the usually active mother evidently made it a kind of excuse to herself for her compulsory repose.

"The wife gets easy to her poetry," said the farmer, with a smile, "which is pleasant enough to hear, though it doesn't keep the grain from sprouting. You're fond o' the hills, you Southland folk? You'll be from level land yoursel', I reckon? —where a' the craps were safe housed afore the weather broke?

We have nae particular reason to complain yet, if we could but make sure o' a week or twa's dry weather. It'll be the holidays still with you?"

"Yes," said young Frankland, slightly disgusted at being so calmly set down as a schoolboy.

"I hear there's some grand schools in England," said Mrs. Campbell; "no' that they're to compare wi' Edinburgh, I suppose? Colin, there's some sherry wine in the press; I think a glass wouldna' harm the young gentleman after his wetting. He'll take something any-way, if you would tell Jess. It's hungry work climbing our hills for a laddie like you—at least if I may reckon by my ain laddies that are aye ready at meal times," said the farmer's wife, with a gracious smile that would not have misbecome a duchess. "You'll be at ane o' the great schools, I suppose? I aye like to learn what I can when there's ony opportunity. I would like my Colin to get a' the advantages, for he's well worthy o' a good education, though we're rather out of the way of it here."

"I am at Eton," said the English boy, who could scarcely refrain from a little ridicule at the idea of sharing "a' the advantages" of that distinguished foundation with a colt like young Colin; "but I should think you would find it too far off to send your son there," he added, all his good breeding being unable to smother a slight laugh as he looked round the homely apartment, and wondered what "all the fellows" would say to a schoolfellow from Ramore.

"Nae occasion to laugh, young gentleman," said Colin the elder; "there's been Lord Chancellors o' England, and generals o' a' the forces, that have come out of houses nae better than this. I am just as ye find me, but I wouldna' say what might befall our Colin. In this country there's nae law to bind a man to the same line o' life as his fathers. Despise naebody, my man, or you may live to be despised in your turn."

"I beg your pardon," said young Frankland, blushing hotly, and feeling Colin's shoes weigh upon his feet like lead; "I did not intend——"

"No, no," said Mrs. Campbell, soothingly; "it's the maister that takes up fancies; but nae doubt Eton is far ower expensive for the like of us, and a bit callant like you may laugh without ony offence. When Colin comes to be a man he'll make his ain company, or I'm mista'en; but I've no wish to pit him amang lords and gentlemen's sons that would jeer at his homely ways. And they tell me there's schules in Edinburgh far afore onything that's kent in England—besides the college," said the mother, with a little pride; "our Colin's done with his schuling. Education takes longer wi' the like of you. After Martinmas he's gaun in to Glasgow to begin his *course*."

To this proud intimation the young visitor listened in silence, not being able to connect the roughshod lad in the boat with a University, whatever might be its form. He addressed himself instead to the scones and butter which Jess the servant, a handsome, powerful woman of five feet eight or so, had set before him on the table. Jess lingered a little, ere she left the room, to pinch the baby's cheeks, and say, "Bless the lamb! eh, what a guid bairn!" with patriarchal friendly familiarity. Meanwhile the farmer sat down, with a thump which made it creak, upon the large old haircloth sofa which filled up one end of the room.

"I've heard there's a great difference between our colleges and the colleges in England," said Colin. "Wi' you they dinna train a lad to onything in particular; wi' us it's a' for a profession,—the kirk, or the law, or physic, as it may be,—a far mair sensible system. I'm no sure it's just civil, though," said the farmer, with a quaint mingling of Scotch complacency and Scotch politeness, "to talk to a stranger of naething but the inferiority o' his ain country. It may be a' true enough, but there's pleasanter topics o' discourse. The Castle's a bonnie situation?

and if you're fond o' the water, yachting, and boating, and that kind o' thing, there's grand opportunity amang our lochs."

"We've got a yacht," said the boy, who found the scones much to his taste, and began to feel a glow of comfort diffusing itself through his inner man—"the fastest sailer I know. We made a little run yesterday down to the Kyles; but Sir Thomas prefers the grouse, though it's awfully hard work, I can tell you, going up those hills. It's so beastly wet," said the young hero. "I never was down here before; but Sir Thomas comes every year to the Highlands; he likes it—he's as strong as a horse—but I prefer the yacht, for my part."

"And who's Sir Thomas, if ane may speer—some friend?" said the farmer's wife.

"Oh—he's my father!" said the Etonian; and a natural flush of shamefacedness at acknowledging such a relationship rose upon the countenance of the British boy.

"Your father?" said Mrs. Campbell, with some amazement, "that's an awfu' queer way to speak of your father; and have you ony brothers and sisters that you're this lang distance off your lane,—and your mamma maybe anxious about you?" continued the kind mother, with a wistful look of inquiry. She was prepared to be sorry for him, concluding that a boy who spoke of his father in such terms, must be motherless, and a neglected child. It was the most tender kind of curiosity which animated the good woman. She formed a theory about the lad on the spot, as women do, and concluded that his cruel father paid no regard to him, and that the boy's heart had been hardened by neglect and want of love. "Figure our Colin ca'ing the maister Mr. Campbell!" she said to herself, and looked very pitifully at young Frankland, who ate his scone without any consciousness of her amiable imaginations.

"Oh, I'm not afraid," said the calm youth. "She knows better; there's ten of us, and some one of the family comes to

grief most days, you know. She's used to that. Besides, I'll get home long before Sir Thomas. It's only four now, and I suppose one could walk down from here—how soon?" All this time he went on so steadily at the scones and the milk, that the heart of the farmer's wife warmed to the possessor of such a frank and appreciative appetite.

"You might put the horse in the gig and drive the young gentleman down," said the soft-hearted woman; "or Colin could row him in the boat as far as the pier. It's a lang walk for such a callant, and you're no thrang. It's awfu' to think o' the rain, how it's taking the bread out of us poor folk's mouths; but to be sure it's the Lord's will—if it be na," said the homely speculator, "that the weather's ane of the things that has been permitted, for wise reasons, to fa' into Ither Hands; and I'm sure, judging by the way it comes just when it's no' wanted, ane might think so, mony a time, in this country side. But ah! it's sinfu' to speak,—and look at yon bonnie rainbow," she continued, turning to the window with her baby in her arms.

Young Frankland got up slowly as he finished his scone. He was only partially sensible of the extreme beauty of the scene before him; but the farmer's wife stood with her baby in her arms, with hidden lights kindling in her soft eyes, expanding and beaming over the lovely landscape. It did her good like a cordial; though even Colin, her sensible husband, looked on, with a smile upon his good-humoured countenance, and was a little amused and much puzzled, as he had been a hundred times before—seeing his wife's pleasure in those common and every-day processes of nature, to know why.

Young Colin in the boat understood better,—he was lying on his oars gazing at it the same moment; arrested in his petulant boyish thoughts, as she had been in her anxieties, the lad came out of, and lost himself in the scene. The sun had burst out suddenly upon the noble range of hills which stretched

across the upper end of the loch—that wistful tender sun which shone out always, dazzling with pathetic gleams of sudden love in this country, "as if he couldna tell whether he might ever see you again," as Mrs. Campbell said—and, just catching the skirts of the rain, had flung a double rainbow across the sheltered lovely curve of the upper banks. One side of the arch stooping over the heathery hillside, lighted it up with an unearthly glory, and the other came down in stately columns, one grand shaft within the other, with solid magnificence and steadiness, into the water. Young Frankland at the window could not help thinking within himself, what a beautiful picture it would make, "if any of those painter fellows could do a rainbow;" but as for young Colin in the boat, the impulse in his heart was to dash up to those heavenly archways, and embrace the shining pillar, and swing himself aloft half-boy, half-poet, to that celestial world, where fiery columns may stand fast upon moving waters—and all is true, but nothing real. The hills, for their share, lay very quiet, taking no part in the momentary drama of the elements; standing passive, letting the sudden light search them over and over, as if seeking for hidden treasure. Just in the midst of the blackness of the rain, never was light and joy so sweet and sudden. The farmer's wife came away from the window with a sigh of pleasure, as the baby stirred in her arms; "Eh, but the world's bonnie, bonnie!" she said to herself, with a feeling that some event of joyful importance had just been enacted before her. As for the boy on the loch, who, being younger, was more abstracted from common affairs, his dream was interrupted loudly by a call from the door: "Come in wi' the boat; I've a message to gie ye for the pier," cried the farmer, at the top of his voice; and the country boy started back to himself, and made a dash at his oars, and pulled inshore as violently and unhandsomely as if the nature of his dreams had been found out, and he was

ashamed of himself. Colin forgot all the softening influences of the scene, and all the fine thoughts that had, unconscious to himself, come into his head, when he found that the commission his father meant to give him was that of rowing the stranger-boy as far as the pier, which was about three miles farther down the loch. If disobedience had been an offence understood at Ramore, possibly he might have refused; but neither boy nor man, however well-inclined, is likely to succeed in doing, the first time of trying, a kind of sin with which he has no acquaintance. To give Colin justice, he did his best, and showed a cordial inclination to make himself disagreeable. He came in so clumsily that the boat grounded a yard or two off shore, and would not by any coaxing be persuaded to approach nearer. And when young Frankland, much to his amazement, leapt on board without wetting his feet, as the country lad maliciously intended, and came against Colin with such force as almost to knock him down, the young boatman thrust his passenger forward very rudely, and was as near capsizing the boat as pride would permit him. "Sit forrit in the stern, sit forrit. Were ye never in a boat afore, that ye think I can row and you sitting there?" said the unchristian Colin, bringing one of the oars heavily against his adversary's shins.

"What the deuce do you mean by that? Give me the oar! We don't row like that on the Thames, I can tell you," said the stranger; and the brief skirmish between them for the possession of the oar having terminated abruptly by the intervention of Colin the elder, who was still within hearing, the two boys set off, sullenly enough, down the loch. The rainbow was dying off by this time, the clouds rolling out again over the hills; and the celestial pillars and heavenly archways had no longer, as may be supposed, since this rude invasion of the real and disagreeable, the least remnant of ground to stand upon in the thoughts of young Colin of Ramore.

CHAPTER II.

"Ye saw the young gentleman safe to the pier? He's a bonnie lad, though maybe no as weel-mannered as ane would like to see," said Mrs. Campbell. "Keep me! such a way to name his father—Bairns maun be awfu' neglected in such a grand house—aye left wi' servants, and never trained to trust their bits of secrets to father or mother. Laddies," said the farmer's wife, with a little solemnity, looking across the sleeping baby upon the four heads of different sizes which bent over their supper at the table before her, "mind you aye, that, right or wrong, them that's maist interested in whatever befalls you is them that belongs to you—maist ready to praise if ye've done weel, and excuse you if ye've done wrang. I hope you were civil to the strange callant, Colin, my man?"

"Oh, ay," said young Colin, not without a movement of conscience; but he did not think it necessary to enter into details.

"When a callant like that is pridefu', and looks as if he thought himself better than other folk, I hope my laddies are no the ones to mind," said the mistress of Ramore. "It shows he hasna had the advantages that might have been expected. It's nae harm to you, but a great deal o' harm to him. Ye dinna ken how weel off you are, you boys," said the mother, making a little address to them as they sat over their supper; Little Johnnie, whose porridge was too hot for him, turned towards her the round, wondering black eyes, which beamed out like a pair of stray stars from his little freckled face, and

through his wisps of flaxen hair, bleached white by rain and sun; but the three others went on very steadily with their supper, and did not disturb themselves; "there's aye your father at hand ready to tell ye whatever you want to ken—no like yon poor callant, that would have to gang to a tutor, or a servant, or something worse; no that he's an ill laddie; but I'm aye keen to see ye behave yoursels like gentlemen, and yon wasna ony great specimen, as it was very easy to see."

After this there was a pause, for none of the boys were disposed to enter into that topic of conversation. After a little period of silence, during which the spoons made a diversion and filled up the vacancy, they began to find their tongues again.

"It's awfu' wet up on the hill," said Archie, the second boy, "and they say the glass is aye falling, and the corn on the Barnton fields has been out this three weeks, and Dugald Macfarlane, he says it's sprouting—and oh, mother!"

"What is it, Archie?"

"The new minister came by when I was down at the smiddy with the brown mare. You never saw such a red head. It is red enough to set the kirk on fire. They were saying at the smiddy that naebody would stand such a colour of hair—it's waur than no preaching weel—and I said I thought that too," said the enterprising Archie; "for I'm sure I never mind ony o' the sermon, but I couldna forget such red hair."

"And I saw him too," said little Johnnie; "he clapped me on the head, and said how was my mammaw; and I said we never ca'ed onybody mammaw, but just mother; and then he clapped me again, and said I was a good boy. What for was I a good boy?" said Johnnie, who was of an inquiring and philosophical frame of mind, "because I said we didna say mammaw? or just because it was me?"

"Because he's a kind man, and has a kind thought for even

the little bairns," said Mrs. Campbell, "and it wasna' like a boy o' mine to say an idle word against him. Do you think they know better at the smiddy, Archie, than here? Poor gentleman," said the good woman, "to be a' this time wearyin' and waitin', and his heart yearnin' within him to get a kirk, and do his Master's work; and then to ha'e a parcel of haverels set up and make a faction against him because he has a red head. It makes ane think shame o' human nature and Scotch folk baith."

"But he canna preach, mother," said Colin, breaking silence almost for the first time; "the red head is only an excuse."

"I dinna like excuses," said his mother, "and I never kent before that you were a judge o' preaching. You may come to ken better about it yoursel before a' 's done. I canna but think there's something wrang when the like o' that can be," said Mrs. Campbell; "he's studied, and he's learned Latin and Greek, and found out a' the ill that can be said about Scripture, and a' the lies that ever have been invented against the truth; and he's been brought up to be a minister a' his days, and knows what's expected. But as soon as word gangs about that the Earl has promised him our kirk, there's opposition raised. No' that onybody kens ony ill of him; but there's the smith, and the wright, and Thomas Scott o' Lintwearie, maun lay their heads thegether—and first they say he canna preach, and then that he'll no' visit, and at least, if a'thing else fails, that he has a red head. If it was a new doctor that was coming, wha would be heeding about the colour o' his hair? but it's the minister that's to stand by our deathbeds, and baptize our bairns, and guide us in the right way: and we're no to let him come in peace, or sit down in comfort. If we canna keep him from getting the kirk, we can make him miserable when he does get it. Eh, bairns; I think shame! and I'm no' so sure as I am in maist things," said the farmer's wife, looking up with a

consciousness of her husband's presence, that the maister himsel—"

"Weel, I'm aye for popular rights," said Colin of Ramore. He had just come in, and had been standing behind taking off his big coat, on which the rain glistened, and listening to all that his wife said. "But if Colin was a man and a minister," said the farmer with a gleam of humour, as he drew his chair towards the fire, "and had to fight his way to a kirk like a' the young men now-a-days, I wouldna say I would like it. They might object to his big mouth; and you've ower muckle a mouth yoursel', Jeanie," continued big Colin, looking admiringly at the comely mother of his boys. "I might tell them wha he took it from, and that if he had as grand a flow of language as his mother, there would be nae fear o' him. As for the red head, the Earl himsel 's a grand example, and if red hair's right in an earl, it canna be immoral in a minister; but Jeanie, though you're an awfu' revolutionary, ye maunna meddle with the kirk, nor take away popular rights."

"I'm no gaun to be led into an argument," said the mistress, with a slightly vexed expression; "but I'm far from sure about the kirk. After you've opposed the minister's coming in, and held committees upon him, and offered objections, and done your best to worry the life out o' him, and make him disgusted baith at himsel' and you, do you think after that ye can attend to him when you're weel, and send for him when you're sick, wi' the right feelings? But I'm no gaun to speak ony mair about the minister. Is the corn in yet, Colin, from the East Park? Eh, bless me! and it was cut before this wean was born?"

"We'll have but a poor harvest after a'," said the farmer; "it's a disappointment, but it canna be helpit. It's strange how something aye comes in, to keep a man down when he thinks he's to have a bit margin; but we must jog on, Jeanie, my woman. As long as we have bread to eat, let us be thankful.

And as for Colin, it needna make ony difference. Glasgow's no so far off, but he can still get his parritch out of the family meal; and as long as he's careful and diligent we'll try and fend for him. It's hard work getting bread out of our hillside," said big Colin; "but ye may have a different life from your father's, lad, if you take heed to the opportunities in your hands."

"A' the opportunities in the world," said Colin the younger, in a burst, "wouldna give me a chance like yon English fellow. Everything comes ready to him. It's no fair. I'll have to make up wi' him first, and then beat him—and so I would," said the boy, with a glow on his face, and a happy unconsciousness of contradicting himself, "if I had the chance."

"Well," said big Colin, "that's just ane o' the things we have to count upon in our way of living. It's little credit to a man to be strong," said the farmer, stretching his great arms with a natural consciousness of power, "unless he has that to do that tries it. It's harder work to me, you may be sure, to get a pickle corn off the hillside, than for the English farmers down in yon callant's country to draw wheat and fatness out o' their furrows. But I think mysel' nane the worse a man," continued Colin of Ramore, with a smile; "Sir Thomas, as the laddie ca's him, gangs wading over the heather a' day after the grouse and the paitricks; he thinks he's playing, himsel', but he's as hard at work as I am. We're a' bluid relations, though the family likeness whiles lies deep and is hard to find. A man maun be fighting wi' something. If it's no the dour earth that refuses him bread, it's the wet bog and the heather that comes atween him and his sport, as he ca's it. Never you mind wha's before you on the road. Make up to him, Colin. Many a day he'll stray out o' the path gathering straws to divert himsel', when you've naething to do but to push on."

"Eh, but I wouldna like a laddie o' mine to think," interrupted his mother, eagerly, "that there's nae guid but getting

on in the world. I'll not have my bairns learn ony such lesson; laddies," said the farmer's wife, in all the solemnity of her innocence, "mind you this aboon a'. You might be princes the morn, and no as good men as your father. There's nae Sir Thomases, nor Earls, nor Lord Chancellors I ever heard tell o', that was mair thought upon nor wi' better reason——"

At this moment Jess entered from the kitchen, to suggest that it was bedtime.

"And lang enough for the mistress to be sitting up, and she so delicate," said the sole servant of the house. "If ye had been in your ain room wi' a fire and a book to read, it would have been wiser-like, than among a' thae noisy laddies, wi' the wean and a seam as if ye were as strong as me. Maister, I wish you would speak to Colin; he's awfu' masterfu'; instead of gaun to his bed, like a civilized lad, yonder he is awa' ben to the kitchen and down by the fire to read his book, till his hair's like a singed sheep's-head, and his cheeks like burning peats. Ane canna do a hand's-turn wi' a parcel o' callants about the place day and nicht," said Jess, in an aggrieved tone.

"And just when Archie Candlish has suppered his horses and come in for half an hour's crack," said the master. "I'll send Colin to his bed; but dinna have ower muckle to say to Archie, he's a rover," continued the good-tempered farmer, who "made allowances" for a little love-making. He raised himself out of his arm-chair with a little hesitation, like a great mastiff uncoiling itself out of a position of comfort, and went slowly away as he spoke, moving off through the dimly-lighted room like an amiable giant as he was.

"Eh, keep me!—and Archie Candlish had just that very minute lookit in at the door," said Jess, lifting her apron to her cheeks, which were glowing with blushes and laughter. "No that I wanted him; but he came in wi' the news aboot the new minister, and noo I'll never hear an end o't, and the maister will think he's aye there."

"If he's a decent lad and means weel, its nae great matter," said the mistress; "but I dinna approve of ower mony lads. Ye may gang through the wood and through the wood and take but a crooked stick at the end."

"There's naebody I ken o' that the mistress can mean, but Bowed Jacob," said Jess reflectively, "and ane might do waur than take him though he's nae great figure of a man. The siller that body makes is a miracle, and it would be grand to live in a twa-storied house, and keep a lass; but he's an awfu' Establishment man, and he micht interfere wi' my convictions," said the young woman with a glimmer of humour which found no response in the mistress's serious eyes; for Mrs. Campbell, being of a poetical and imaginative temperament, took most things much in earnest, and was slow to perceive a joke.

"You shouldna speak about convictions in that light way, Jess," said the farmer's wife. "I wouldna meddle wi' them mysel', no for a' the wealth o' the parish; but though the maister and me are strong Kirk folk, ye ken ye never were molested here."

"To hear Archie Candlish about the new minister!" cried Jess, whose quick ear had already ascertained that her master had paused in the kitchen to speak to her visitor, "ye would laugh; but though it's grand fun for the folk, maybe it's no so pleasant for the poor man. We put down our names for the man we like best, us Free Kirk folk, but it's different in the parish. There's Tammas Scott, he vows he'll object to every presentee the Earl puts in. I'm no heeding for the Earl," said Jesse; "he's a dour tory and can fecht for himsel'; but eh I wouldna be that poor minister set up there for a' the parish to object to. I'd rather work at a weaver's loom or sell herrings about the country-side, if it was me!"

"Weel, weel, things that are hard for the flesh are guid for the spirit—or at least folk say so," cried the mistress of Ramore.

"I dinna believe in that for my part," said the energetic Jess, as she lifted the wooden cradle in her strong arms. "Leave the wean still, mistress, and draw your shawl about ye. I could carry you too, for that matter. Eh me, I'm no o' that way o' thinking; when ye're happy and weel likit, ye're aye good in proportion. No to gang against the words o' Scripture," said Jess, setting down the big cradle with a bump in her mistress's bedroom, and looking anxiously at the sleeping baby, which with a little start and gape, resisted this attempt to break its slumbers; "but eh, mistress, it's aye my opinion that the happier folk are the better they are. I never was as happy as in this house," continued the grateful handmaiden, furtively pursuing a tear into the corner of her eye, with a large forefinger, "no that I'm meaning to say I'm guid; but yet—"

"You might be waur," said the mistress, with a smile. "You've aye a kind heart and a blythe look, and that gangs a far way wi' the maister and me. But it's time Archie Candlish was hame to his mother. When there's nae moon and such heavy roads, you shouldna bring a decent man three mile out of his way at this hour o' the nicht to see you."

"Me? as if *I* was wanting him," said Jess, "and him no a word to say to me or ony lass, but about the beasts and the new minister. I'll be back in half a minute; I wouldna waste my time upon a gomeril like you."

While Jess sallied forth through the chilly passages to which the weeping atmosphere had communicated a sensation of universal damp, the mistress knelt down to arrange her infant more commodiously in its homely nest. The red firelight made harmless glimmers all over her figure, catching now and then a sidelong glance out of her eyes as she smoothed the little pillow, and laid the tiny coverlet over the small unconscious creature wrapt closely in webs and bands of sleep. When she had done, she still knelt watching it as mothers will, with

a smile upon her face. After a while the beaming soft dark eyes turned to the light with a natural attraction, to the glimmers of the fire shooting accidental rays into all the corners, and to the steady little candle on the mantel-shelf. The mistress looked round on all the familiar objects of the homely low-roofed chamber. Outside, the rain fell heavily still upon the damp and sodden country, soaking silently in the dark into the forlorn wheat-sheaves, which had been standing in the fields to dry in ineffectual hopefulness for past weeks. Matters did not look promising on the farm of Ramore, and nothing had occurred to add any particular happiness to its mistress's lot. But happiness is perverse and follows no rule, and Jess's sentiment found an echo in Mrs. Campbell's mind. As she knelt by the cradle, her heart suddenly swelled with a consciousness of the perfection of life and joy in her and around her. It was in homely words enough that she gave it expression—"A' weel, and under ae roof," she said to herself with exquisite dews of thankfulness in her eyes. "And the Lord have pity on lone folk and sorrowful," added the tender woman, with a compassion beyond words, a yearning that all might be glad like herself; the pity of happiness, which is of all pity, the most divine. Her boys were saying abrupt prayers, one by one, as they sank in succession into dreamless slumber. The master had gone out in the rain to take one last look over his kyne and his farmyard, and see that all was safe for the night, and Archie Candlish had just been dismissed with a stinging jest from the kitchen door, which Jess bolted and barred with cheerful din, singing softly to herself as she went about the house putting up the innocent shutters, which could not have resisted the first touch of a skilful hand. The rain was falling all over the wet silent country; the Holy Loch gleamed like a kind of twilight spot in the darkness, and the house of Ramore stood shut up and hushed, no light at all to be seen but that from the open door, which the farmer

suddenly extinguished as he came in. But when that solitary light died out from the invisible hillside, and the darkness and the rain and the whispering night took undisturbed possession, was just the moment when the mother within, kneeling over her cradle in the firelight, was surprised by that sudden conscious touch of happiness.—"Happiness? oh, ay, weel enough; we've a great deal to be thankfu' for," said big Colin, with a little sleepy surprise; "if it werna for the sprouting corn and the broken weather; but I dinna see onything particular to be happy about at this minute, and I'm gaun to my bed."

For the prose and the poetry did not exactly understand each other at all times, even in the primitive farm-house of Ramore.

CHAPTER III.

THE internal economy of a Scotch parish is not so clearly comprehensible now-a-days as it was in former times. Civilization itself has made countless inroads upon the original unities everywhere, and the changes that have come to pass within the recollection of the living generation are almost as great though very different from those which made Scotland during last century so picturesque in its state of transition. When Sunday morning dawned upon the Holy Loch, it did not shine upon that pretty rural picture of unanimous church-going so well-known to the history of the past. The groups from the cottages took different ways—the carriage from the Castle swept round the hill to the other side of the parish, where there was an "English Chapel." The reign of opinion and liking was established in the once primitive community. Half of the people ascended the hillside to the Free Church, while the others wound down the side of the loch to the Kirk, which had once accommodated the whole parish. This state of affairs had become so usual that even polemical feeling had ceased to a great extent, and the two streams of church-going people crossed each other placidly without recriminations. This day, for a wonder, the sun was shining brightly, notwithstanding a cloudy stormy sky, which now and then heaved forward a rolling mass of vapour, and dispersed it sharply over the hills in a flying mist and shower.

The parish church lay at the lower end of the loch, a pretty little church built since the days when architecture had penetrated even into Scotland. Colin of Ramore and his family were

there in their pew, the boys arranged in order of seniority between Mrs. Campbell, who sat at the head, and the farmer himself who kept the seat at the door. Black-eyed Johnnie, with his hair bleached white by constant exposure, and his round eyes wandering over the walls and the pews and the pulpit and the people, sat by his mother's side, and the younger Colin occupied his post of seniority by his father. They were all seated, in this disposition, when the present occupant of the Castle, Sir Thomas Frankland, lounged up the little aisle, with his son after him. Sir Thomas was quite devout and respectable, a man who knew how to conduct himself even in such a novel scene—and after all a Presbyterian church was no novelty to the sportsman—but to Harry the aspect of everything was new, and his curiosity was excited. It was a critical moment in the history of the parish. The former minister had been transferred only a few weeks before to a more important station, and the Earl, the patron, had, according to Scotch phraseology, "presented" a new incumbent to the living. This unhappy man was ascending the pulpit when the Franklands, father and son, entered the church. For the Earl's presentation by no means implied the peaceable entrance of the new minister; he had to preach, to give the people an opportunity of deciding whether they liked him or not; and if they did not like him, they had the power of "objecting," that is, of urging special reasons for their dislike before the Presbytery, with a certainty of making a little noise in the district, and a reasonable probability of disgusting and mortifying the unlucky presentee, to the point of throwing up his appointment. All this was well known to the unfortunate man, who rose up in the pulpit as Sir Thomas found a seat, and proceeded to read the psalm with a somewhat embarrassed and faltering voice. He was moderately young and well-looking, with a face, at the present moment, more agitated than was quite harmonious with the position in which

he stood: for he was quite aware that everybody was criticizing him, and that the inflections of his voice and the fiery tint of his hair were being noted by eager commentators bent upon finding ground for an "objection" in everything he said. Such a consciousness naturally does not promote ease or comfort. His hair looked redder than ever, as a stray ray of sunshine gleamed in upon him, and his voice took a nervous break as he looked over the many hard unsympathetic faces which were regarding him with the sharp curiosity and inspection of excited wits.

But while Harry Frankland made, as he thought, "an ass of himself" on every occasion that offered—standing bolt upright when the congregation began to sing, which they did at their leisure, seated in the usual way—and kicking his heels in an attempt to kneel when everybody round him rose up for the prayer, and feeling terribly red and ashamed at each mistake, Colin the younger, of Ramore, occupied himself, like a heartless young critic as he was, in making observations on the minister. Colin, like his father, had a high opinion of "popular rights." It was his idea, somehow drawn in with the damp Highland air he breathed, that the right of objecting to a presentee was one of the most important privileges of a Scotch Churchman. Then, he was to be a minister himself, and the consciousness of this fact intensified the natural opposition which prompted the boy's mind to resist anything and everything that threatened to be imposed on him. Colin even listened to the prayer, which was a thing not usual with him, that he might find out the objectionable phrases. And to be sure there were plenty of objectionable phrases to mar the real devotion; the vainest of vain repetitions, well-known and familiar as household words to every Scotch ear, demonstrated how little effect the absence of a liturgy has in promoting fervent and individual supplications. The congregation in

general listened, like young Colin, standing up in easy attitudes, and observing everything that passed around them with open-eyed composure. It did not look much like common supplication, nor did it pretend to be—for the people were but *listening* to the minister's prayer, which, to tell the truth, contained various expository and remonstrative paragraphs, which were clearly addressed to the congregation; and they were all very glad to sit down when it was over, and clear their throats, and prepare for the sermon, which was the real business of the day.

"I dinna like a' that new-fangled nonsense to begin with," said Eben Campbell, of Barnton, as he walked home after church, with the party from Ramore; "naebody wants twa chapters read at one diet of worship. The Bible's grand at hame, but that's no what a man gangs to the kirk for; that, and so mony prayers—it's naething but a great offput of time."

"But we never can have ower muckle o' the word of God," said Colin of Ramore's wife.

"I'm of Eben's opinion," said another neighbour. "We have the word o' God at hame, and I hope we make a good use o' it; but that's no what we gang to the kirk to hear. When ye see a man that's set up in the pulpit for anither purpose a'thegether, spending half his time in reading chapters and ither preliminaries, I aye consider it's a sure sign that he hasna muckle o' his ain to say."

They were all walking abreast in a leisurely Sunday fashion up the loch; the children roaming about the skirts of the older party, some in front and some behind, occasionally making furtive investigations into the condition of the brambles, an anti-Sabbatical occupation which was sharply interrupted when found out—the women picking their steps along the edges of the muddy road, with now and then a word of pleasant gossip, while the men trudged on sturdily through the puddles, discussing the great subject of the day.

"Some of the new folk from the Castle were in the kirk to-day," said one of the party,—"which is a respect to the parish the Earl doesna pay himself. Things are terrible changed in that way since my young days. The auld Earl, this ane's father, was an elder in the Kirk; and gentle and simple, we a' said our prayers thegether—"

"I dinna approve of that expression," said Eben of Barnton. "To speak of saying your prayers in the kirk is pure papistry. Say your prayers at hame, as I hope we a' do, at the family altar, no to speak of private devotions," said this defender of the faith, with a glance at the unlucky individual who had just spoken, and who was understood not to be so regular in the article of family prayer as he ought to have been. "We gang to the kirk to have our minds stirred up and put in remembrance. I dinna approve of the English fashion of putting everything into the prayers."

"Weel, weel, I meant nae harm," said the previous speaker. "We a' gaed to the Kirk, was what I meant to say; and there's the Queen, she aye sets a grand example. You'll no find her driving off three or four miles to an English Chapel. I consider it's a great respect to the parish to see Sir Thomas in the Castle pew."

"I would rather see him respect the Sabbath day," said Eben Campbell, pointing out a little pleasure-boat, a tiny little cockle-shell, with a morsel of snow-white sail, which just then appeared in the middle of the loch, rushing up beautifully before the wind, through the placid waters, and lighting up the landscape with a touch of life and motion. Young Colin was at Eben's elbow, and followed the movement of his hand with keen eyes. A spark of jealousy had kindled in the boy's breast—he could not have told why. He was not so horrified as he ought to have been at the sight of the boat disturbing the Sunday quiet; but, with a swell of indignation and resentment in his boyish

heart, he thought of the difference between himself and the young visitor at the Castle. It looked symbolical to Colin. He, trudging heavily over the muddy, lengthy road; the other, flying along in that dainty, little, bird-like boat, with those white wings of sail, which pleased Colin's eye in spite of himself, carrying him on as lightly and swiftly as heart could desire. Why should one boy have such a wonderful advantage over another? It was the first grand problem which had puzzled and embittered Colin's thoughts.

"There they go!" said the boy. "It's fine and easy, running like that before the wind. They'll get to the end o' the loch before we've got over a mile. That makes an awfu' difference," said Colin, with subdued wrath; he was thinking of other things besides the long walk from church and the muddy road.

"We'll may be get home as soon, for all that," said his father, who guessed the boy's thoughts; for the elder Colin's experienced eye had already seen that mists were rising among the hills, and that the fair breeze would soon be fair no longer. The scene changed as if by enchantment while the farmer spoke. Such changes come and go like breath over the Holy Loch. The sunshine which had been making the whole landscape into a visible paradise, vanished suddenly off the hills and waters like a frightened thing, and a visible darkness came brooding over the mountains, dropping lower every moment like a pall of gloom over the lower banks and the suddenly paled and shivering loch. The joyous little boat, which had been careering on as if by a natural impulse of delight, suddenly changed its character along with all the other details of the picture. The spectators saw its white sail, fluttering like an alarmed seabird, against the black background of cloud. Then it began to tack and waver and make awkward tremulous darts across the darkened water. The party of pedestrians stood still to watch it, as the position became dangerous. They knew the loch and the winds too well to look

on with composure. As for young Colin of Ramore, his heart began to leap and swell in his boyish bosom. Was that his adversary, the favoured rival whom he had recognised by instinct, who was fighting for his life out there in midwater, with the storm gaining on him, and his little vessel staggering in the wind? Colin did not hear the remarks of the other spectators. He felt in his heart that he was looking on at a struggle which was for life or death, and his contempt for the skill of the amateur sailor, whose unused hands were so manifestly unable to manage the boat, was mingled with a kind of despair lest a stronger power should snatch this opponent of his own out of the future strife, in which Colin had vowed to himself to be victorious.

"You fool! take in the sail," he shouted, putting both his hands to his mouth, forgetting how impossible it was that the sound could reach; and then scarcely knowing what he was about, the boy rushed down to the beach, and jumped into the nearest boat. The sound of his oars furiously plashing through the silence was the first indication to his companions of what he had done. And he did not even see nor hear the calls and gestures with which he was summoned back again. His oars, and how to get there at a flight like a bird, occupied his mind entirely. Yet even in his anxiety he scorned to ask for help which would have carried him so much sooner to the spot he aimed at. As this sudden sound echoed through the profound silence, various outcries came from the group on the bank.

"It's tempting Providence," cried Eben Campbell. "Yon's a judgment on the Sabbath-breaker,—and what can the laddie do? Come back, sir, this moment, come back! Ye'll never win there in time."

As for the boy's mother, after his first start she clasped her hands together, and watched the boat with an interest too intense for words. "He's in nae danger," she said to herself softly;

and it would have been hard to tell whether she was sorry or glad that her boy's enterprise was attended by no personal peril.

"Let him be," said the farmer of Ramore, pushing aside his anxious neighbour, who was calling Colin ineffectually but without intermission. Colin Campbell's face had taken a sudden crimson flush which nobody could account for. He went off up the beach with heavy rapid steps, scattering the shingle round his feet, to a spot exactly opposite the struggling boat, and stood there watching with wonderful eagerness. The little white sail was still fluttering and struggling like a distressed bird upon the black overclouded water. Now it lurched over till the very mast seemed to touch the loch—now recovered itself for a tremulous moment—and finally, shivering like a living creature, gave one wild sudden stagger, and disappeared. When the speck of white vanished out of the black landscape, a cry came out of all their hearts; and hopeless as it was, the very man who had been calling Colin back, rushed in his turn to a boat, and pushed off violently into the loch. The women stood huddled together, helpless with terror and grief. "The bit laddie! the bit laddie!" cried one of them—"some poor woman's bairn." As for Mrs. Campbell, the world grew dark round her as she strained her eyes after Colin's boat. She did not faint, for such was not the habit of the Holy Loch; but she sank down suddenly on the wet green bank, and put up her hand over her eyes as if to shade them from some imaginary sunshine, and gazed, not seeing anything, after her boy. To see her, delicate as she was, with the woman weakness which they all understood, seating herself in this wild way on the wet bank, distracted the attention of her kindly female neighbours, even from the terrible event which had just taken place before their eyes.

"Maybe the lad can swim," said Eben Campbell's wife—"onyway yonder's your Colin running races with death to save

him. But you maunna sit here—come into Dugald Macfarlane's house. There's my man away in another boat and some mair. But we canna let you sit here."

"Eh, my Colin, I canna see my Colin," said the mistress of Ramore; but they led her away into the nearest cottage, notwithstanding her reluctance. There they all stood clustering at the window, aiding the eyes which had failed her in her weakness. Colin's mother sat silent in the chair where they had placed her, trembling and rocking herself to and fro. Her heart within her was praying and crying for the boys—the two boys whom in this moment of confused anxiety she could not separate—her own first-born, and the stranger who was "another woman's bairn." God help all women and mothers!—though Colin was safe, what could her heart do but break at the thought of the sudden calamity which had shut out the sunshine from another. She rocked herself to and fro, ceasing at last to hear what they said to her, and scarcely aware of anything except the dull clank of the oars against the boat's side; somebody coming or going, she knew not which—always coming or going—never bringing certain news which was lost and which saved.

The mistress of Ramore was still in this stupor of anxiety, when young Harry Frankland, dripping and all but insensible, was carried into Dugald Macfarlane's cottage. The little room became dark instantly with such a cloud of men that it was difficult to make out how he had been saved, or if there was indeed any life left in the lad. But Dugald Macfarlane's wife, who had the ferry-boat at Struan, and understood about drowning, had bestirred herself in the meantime, and had hot blankets and other necessaries in the inner room where big Colin Campbell carried the boy. Then all the men about burst at once into the narrative. "If it hadna been for little Colin o' Ramore"—was about all Mrs. Campbell made out of the tale. The cottage was so thronged that there was scarcely an entrance left for the

doctor and Sir Thomas who had both been summoned by anxious messengers. By this time the storm had come down upon the loch, and a wild sudden tempest of rain was sweeping black across hill and water, obliterating every line of the landscape. Half-way across, playing on the surface of the water was a bit of spar with a scarlet rag attached to it, which made a great show glistening over the black waves. This was all that was visible of the pleasure-boat in which the young stranger had been bounding along so pleasantly an hour before. The neighbours dropped off gradually, dispersing to other adjacent houses to talk over the incident, or pushing homeward with an indifference to the storm that was natural to the dwellers on the Holy Loch; and it was only when she was left alone, waiting for her husband, who was in the inner room with Sir Thomas and the saved boy, that Mrs. Campbell perceived Colin's bashful face gleaming in furtively at the open door.

"It's no so wet as it was; come away, mother, now," said Colin, "there's nae fears o' *him?*" And the lad pointed half with an assertion, half with an inquiry, towards the inner room. It was an unlucky moment for the shy hero, for just then big Colin of Ramore appeared with Sir Thomas at the door.

"This is the boy that saved my son," said Harry's father. "You are a brave fellow; neither he nor I will ever forget it. Let me know if there is anything I can serve you in, and to the best of my power I will help you as you have helped me. What does he say?"

"I say," said Colin the younger, with fierce blushes, "that it wasna me. I've done naething to be thanked for. Yon fellow swims like a fish, and he saved himsel."

And then there came an answering voice from the inner room —a boy's voice subdued out of its natural falsetto into feminine tones of weakness, "He's telling a lie, that fellow there," cried the other from his bed; "he picked me up when I was about

done for. I'll fight him if he likes as soon as I'm able. But that's a lie he tells you; that's him—that Campbell fellow there."

Upon which young Colin of Ramore clenched his fists in his wet pockets and faced towards the door, which Dugald Macfarlane's wife closed softly, looking out upon him, shaking her head and holding up a finger to impose silence; the two fathers meanwhile looked in each other's faces. The English baronet and the Scotch farmer both broke into a low, unsteady laugh, and then with an impulse of fellowship, mutually extended their hands.

"We have nae reason to think shame of our sons," said Colin Campbell with his Scotch dignity; "as for service or reward that is neither here nor there; what my boy did your boy would do if he had the chance, and there's nae mair to be said that I can see."

"There's a great deal more to be said," said Sir Thomas; "Lady Frankland will call on Mrs. Campbell, and thank that brave boy of yours; and if you think I can forget such a service,—I tell you there's a great deal more to be said," said the sportsman, breaking down suddenly with a little effusion, of which he was half ashamed.

"The gentleman's right, Colin," said the mistress of Ramore. "God be thanked for the two laddies! My heart was breaking for the English lady. God be thanked! That's a' there is to say. But I'll be real glad to see that open-hearted callant when he's well, and his mother too," said the farmer's wife, turning her soft eyes upon Sir Thomas, with a gracious response to the overflowing of his heart. Sir Thomas took off his hat to her as respectfully as he would have done to the Queen, when she took her husband's strong arm, and followed Colin, who by this time, with his hands in his pockets and his heart beating loudly, was half way to Ramore; and now they had other topics besides that unfailing one of the new minister to talk of on the way.

CHAPTER IV.

NOVEMBER weather is not cheerful on the Holy Loch. The dazzling snow on the hills when there is sunshine, the sharp cold blue of the water, the withered ferns and heather on the banks, give it, it is true, a new tone of colour unknown to its placid summer beauty; but, when there is no sunshine, as is more usual, when the mountains are folded in dark mists, and the rain falls cold, and the trees rain down a still heavier and more melancholy shower of perpetually falling leaves, there is little in the landscape to cheer the spirits of the inhabitants, who, fortunately for themselves, take it very calmly, like most people accustomed to such a climate. The farmer's wife of Ramore, however, was not of that equable mind. When she looked out from her homely parlour-window, it oppressed her heart to miss her mountains, and to see the heavy atmosphere closing in over her own little stretch of hill-side. She was busy, to be sure, and had not much time to think of it; but, when she paused for a moment in her many occupations, and looked wistfully for signs of "clearing," the poetic soul in her homely bosom fell subdued into an unconscious harmony with the heavy sky. If the baby looked pale by chance, the mother took gloomy views of the matter on such days, and was subject to little momentary failures of hope and courage, which amazed, and at the same time amused, big Colin, who by this time knew all about it.

"You were blythe enough about us a' yesterday, Jeanie," he would say with a smile, "and nothing's happened to change the prospect but the rain. It's just as weel for the wean that the

doctor's a dozen miles off; for it's your e'en that want physic, and a glint o' sunshine would set a' right." He was standing by her, hovering like a great good-humoured cloud, his eyes dwelling upon her with that tender perception of her sacred weakness, and admiring pride in her more delicate faculties, which are of the highest essence of love.

"I hope you dinna think me a fool altogether." the mistress would answer, with momentary offence; "as if I was thinking of the rain, or as if there was onything but rain to be lookit for! but when I mind that my Colin gangs away the morn—"

And then she took up her basket of mended stockings, and, with a little impatience, to hide a chance drop on her eyelash, carried them away to Colin's room, where his chest stood open and was being packed for the journey. It was not a very long journey, but it was the boy's first outset into independent life; and very independent life was that which awaited the country lad in Glasgow, where he was going to the University. On such a day dark shadows of many a melancholy story floated somehow upon the darkened atmosphere into Mrs. Campbell's mind.

"If we could but have boarded him in a decent family," she said to herself, as she packed her boy's stockings. But it had been "a bad year" at Ramore, and no decent family would have received young Colin for so small a sum as that on which he himself and various more wise advisers considered it possible for him to live, by the help of an occasional hamper of home-produce, in a little lodging of his own. Mrs. Campbell had acceded to this arrangement as the best; but it occurred to her to remember various wrecks she had encountered even in her innocent life; and her heart failed her a little as she leaned over Colin's big "kist."

Colin himself said very little on the subject, though he thought of nothing else; but he was a taciturn Scotch boy, totally unused to disclose his feelings. He was strolling round

and round the place with his hands in his pockets, gradually getting soaked by the persistent rain, and rather liking it than otherwise. As he strayed about—having nothing to do that day in consideration of its being his last day at home—Colin's presence was by no means welcomed by the other people about the farm. Of course, being unoccupied himself, he had the sharpest eyes for every blunder that was going on in the stable or the byre, and announced his little discoveries with a charming candour. But in his heart, even at the moment when he was driving Jess to frenzy by uncalled-for remarks touching the dinner of the pigs, Colin was all a-blaze with anticipation of the new life that was to begin to-morrow. He thought of it as something grand and complete, not made up of petty details like this life he was leaving. It was a mist of learning, daily stimulation and encounter of wits, with glorious prizes and honours hanging in the hazy distance, which Colin saw as he went strolling about the farm-yard in the rain, with his hands in his pockets. If he said anything articulate to himself on the subject, it was comprised in one succinct, but seemingly inapplicable, statement. "Eton's no a college," he said once, under his breath, with a dark glow of satisfaction on his face as he stopped opposite the door, and cast a glance upon the loch and the boat, which latter was now drawn up high and dry out of reach of the wintry water; and then a cloud suddenly lowered over Colin's face, as a sudden doubt of his own accuracy seized him—a torturing thought which drove him indoors instantly to resolve his doubt by reference to a wonderful old Gazetteer which was believed in at Ramore. Colin found it recorded there, to his great mental disturbance, that Eton *was* a college; but, on further inquiry, derived great comfort from knowing that it certainly was not a university, after which he felt himself again at liberty to issue forth and superintend and aggravate all the busy people about the farm.

That night the family supper-table was somewhat dull, notwithstanding the excitement of the boys, for Archie was to accompany his father and brother to Glasgow, and was in great glee over that unusual delight. Mrs. Campbell, for her part, was full of thoughts natural enough to the mother of so many sons. She kept looking at her boys as they sat round the table, absorbed in their supper. "This is the beginning, but wha can tell what may be the end?" she said half to herself; "they'll a' be gane afore we ken what we're doing." Little Johnnie, to be sure, was but six years old; but the mother's imagination leapt over ten years, and saw the house empty, and all the young lives out in the world. "Eh me!" said the reflective woman, "that's what we bring up our bairns for, and rejoice over them as if they were treasure; and then by the time we're auld they're a' gane;" and, as she spoke, not the present shadow only, but legions of vague desolations in the time to come came rolling up like mists upon her tender soul.

"As lang as there's you and me, we'll fend, Jeanie," said the farmer, with a smile; "twa's very good company to my way o' thinking; but there's plenty of time to think about the dispersion which canna take place yet for a year or twa. The boys came into the world to live their ain lives and serve their Maker, and no' just to pleasure you and me. If you've a' done, ye can cry on Jess, and bring out the big Bible, Colin. We maunna miss our prayers to-night."

To tell the truth, Colin of Ramore was not quite so regular in his discharge of this duty as his next neighbour, Eben Campbell of Barnton, thought necessary, and was disapproved of accordingly by that virtuous critic; but the homely little service was perhaps all the more touching on this special occasion, and marked the "night before Colin went first to the college," as a night to be remembered. When his brothers trooped off to bed, Colin remained behind as a special distinction. His mother was

sitting by the fire without even her knitting, with her hands crossed in her lap, and clouds of troubled, tender thought veiling her soft eyes. As for the farmer, he sat looking on with a faint gleam of humour in his face. He knew that his wife was going to speak out her anxious heart to her boy, and big Colin's respect for her judgment was just touched by a man's smile at her womanish solemnity, and the great unlikelihood that her innocent advices would have the effect she imagined upon her son's career. But, notwithstanding the smile, big Colin, too, listened with interest to all that his wife had to say.

"Come here and sit down," said Mrs. Campbell; "you needna' think shame of my hand on your head, though you *are* gaun to the college the morn. Eh! Colin, you dinna ken a' the temptations nor the trials. Ye've aye had your ain way at hame—"

Here Colin made a little movement of irrepressible dissent. "I've aye done what I was bidden," said the honest boy. He could not accept that gentle fiction even when his heart was touched by his mother's farewell.

"Weel, weel," said the farmer's wife, with a little sigh; "you've had your ain way as far as it was good for you. But its awfu' different, living among strangers, and living in your father's house. Ye'll have to think for yoursel' and take care of yoursel' now. I'm no one to give many advices," said the mother, putting up her hand furtively to her eyes, and looking into the fire till the tears should be re-absorbed which had gathered there. "But I wouldna like my firstborn to leave Ramore and think a' was as fair in the world as appears to the common e'e. I've been real weel off a' my days," said the mistress, slowly, letting the tears which she had restrained before drop freely at this reminiscence of happiness; "a guid father and mother to bring me up, and then *him* there, that's the kindest man!—But you and me needna praise your father,

Colin; we can leave that to them that dinna ken," she went on, recovering herself; "but I've had ae trouble for a' so weel as I've been, and I mean to tell you what that is afore you set out in the world for yoursel'."

"Nothing about poor George," said the farmer, breaking in—

"Oh, ay, Colin, just about poor George; I maun speak," said the mistress. "He was far the bonniest o' our family, and the best-likit; and he was to be a minister, laddie, like you. He used to come hame with his prizes, and bring the very sunshine to the auld house. Eh! but my mother was proud; and for me, I thought there was nothing in this world he mightna' do if he likit. Colin," said Mrs. Campbell, with solemn looks, "are ye listening? The last time I saw my brother was in a puir place at Liverpool, a' in rags and dirt, with an auld coat buttoned to his throat, that it mightna' be seen what was wantin', and a' his wild hair hangin' about his face, and his feet out o' his shoon, and hunger in his eye—"

"Jeanie, Jeanie, nae mair," said big Colin from the other side of the fire.

"But I maun say mair; I maun tell a'," cried his wife, with tears. "Hunger in his bonnie face, that was ance the blythest in the country-side—no hunger for honest meat as nature might crave, but for a' thing that was unlawfu', and evil, and killin' to soul and body. He had to be watched for fear he should spend the hard-won silver that we had a' scraped together to send him away. Him that had been our pride, we couldna trust him, Colin, no ten minutes out o' our sight but he was in some new trouble. It was to Australia we sent him, where a' the unfortunates go. Eh, me! the like o' that ship sailing! If there was a kind o' hope in our breasts it was the hope o' despair. It wasna' my will, for what is there in a new place to make a man reform his ways? And that was how your Uncle George went away."

"And then?" cried the boy, whose interest was raised, and who had heard mysteriously of this Uncle George before.

"We've heard no word from that day to this," said Mrs. Campbell, drying her eyes. "Listen till I tell you a' that his pleasurings brought him to. First, and greatest, to say what was not true, Colin—to deceive them that trusted him. If the day should ever dawn that I couldna trust a bairn o' mine—if it should ever come sickening to my heart that e'e or tongue was false that belonged to me—if I had to watch my laddies, and to stand in doubt at every word they said—eh! Colin, God send I may be in my grave afore such an awfu' fate should come to me."

Young Colin of Ramore answered not a word; he stared into the fire instead, making horrible faces unawares. He could not have denied, had he been taxed with it, that tears were in his eyes; but rather than shed them he would have endured tortures; and any expression of his feelings in words was more impossible still.

"No as if I was a better woman than my mother, or worthy o' a better fate," said the thoughtful mistress of Ramore; "for she was ane o' the excellent of the earth, as a'body kens; and if ever a woman won to her rest through great tribulations, she was ane; and, if the Lord sent the cross, He would send the strength to bear it. But oh! Colin, my man, it would be kind to drown your mother in the loch, or fell her on the hill, sooner than bring upon her such great anguish and trouble as I have told you of this night."

"Now, wife," said the farmer, interfering, "you've said your part. Nae such thought is in Colin's head. Gang you and look after his kist, and see that a' thing's right; and him and me will have our crack the time you're away. Your mother's an innocent woman," said big Colin, after a pause, when she had gone away; "she kens nae mair of the world than the bairn on her knee. When you're a man you'll ken the benefit of taking your first

notions from a woman like that. No an imagination in her mind but what's good and true. It's hard work fechting through this world without marks o' the battle," said big Colin with a little pathos; "but a man wi' the like o' *her* by his side maun be ill indeed if he gangs very far wrang. It mightna' be a' to the purpose," continued the farmer, with a little of his half-conscious common-sense superiority, "as appeals to the feelings seldom are; but, Colin, if you take my advice, you'll mind every word of what your mother says."

Colin said not a syllable in reply. He had got rid of the tears safely, which was a great deal gained: they must have fallen had the mistress remained two seconds longer looking at him with her soft beaming eyes; but he had not quite gulped down yet that climbing sorrow which had him by the throat. Anyhow, even if his voice had been at his own command, he was very unlikely to have made any reply.

"Ye'll find a' strange when ye gang to Glasgow," continued the farmer. "I'm no feared for any great temptation, except idleness, besetting a callant like you; but a man that has his ain bread and his ain way to make in the world, has nae time for idleness. You've guid abilities, Colin, and if they dinna come to something you'll have but yoursel' to blame: and I wouldna' put the reproach on my Maker of having brought a useless soul into the world, if I were you," said big Colin. "There's never ony failures that I can see among the lower creation, without some guid reason; but it's the privilege o' men to fail without ony cause o' failure except want o' will to do weel. When ye see the like of George, for instance, ye ask what the Lord took the trouble to make such a ne'er-do-weel for?" said the homely philosopher; "I never could help thinking, for my part, that it was labour lost—though nae doubt Providence kent better; but I wouldna' be like *that* if I could help it. There's no a silly sheep on the hill, nor horse in the stable, that isna' a credit to Him

that made it. I would take good heed no to put mysel' beneath the brute beasts, if I were you."

"I'm no meaning," cried Colin, with ungrammatical abruptness and a little offence; for he was pricked in his pride by this address, which was not, according to his father's ideas, any "appeal to his feelings," but a calm and common-sense way of putting an argument before the boy.

"I never said you were," said the farmer. "It'll cost us hard work to keep ye at your studies, and I put it to your honour no to waste your time; and you'll write regular, and mind what kind o' thoughts your mother's thinking at home in Ramore; and I may tell you, Colin, I put confidence in you," said the father, laying his big hand with a heavy momentary pressure upon the lad's shoulder. "Now, good night, and go to your bed, and prepare for the morn."

Such were the parting advices with which the boy was sent out into the world. His mother was in his room, kneeling before his chest, adding the last particulars to its store, when Colin entered the homely little chamber—but what they said to each other before they parted was for nobody's ear; and the morning was blazing with a wintry brightness, and all the hills standing white against the sky, and the heart of the mistress hopeful as the day, when she wiped off her tears with her apron, and waved her farewell to her boy, as he went off in the little steamer which twice a day thrilled the loch with communications from the world. "He'll come back in the spring," she said to herself, as she went about her homely work, and ordered her household. And so young Colin went forth, all dauntless and courageous, into the great battlefield, to encounter whatso ever conflicts might come to him, and to conquer the big world and all that was therein, in the victorious dreams of his youth.

CHAPTER V.

THE first disappointment encountered by the young hero was the wonderful shock of finding out that it was not an abstract world he had to encounter and fight with, but that life was an affair of days and hours exactly as at Ramore, which was about his first real mental experience and discovery. It was a strange mortification to Colin, who was, like his mother, a poet in his soul, to find out that there was nothing abstract in his new existence, but that a perpetually recurring round of lessons to learn, and classes to attend, and meals to eat, made up the days, which were noways changed in their character from those days which he had already known for all the fifteen years of his life. After the first shock, however, he went on with undiminished courage—for at fifteen it is so easy to think that those great hours are waiting for us somewhere in the undisclosed orb of existence. Certainly a time would come when every day, of itself a radiant whole and complete unity, would roll forth majestic like the earth in the mystic atmosphere. He had missed it this time, but after a while it must come; for the future, like the past, works wonders upon the aspect of time; and still it is true of the commonest hours that they—

> ——"win
> A glory from their being far,
> And orb into the perfect star
> We saw not when we walked therein."

So thought Colin, looking at them from the other side, and seeing a perfection which nobody ever reached in this world.

But of course he did not know that—so he postponed those grand days, and barred them up with shining doors, on which was written the name and probable date of the next great change in his existence; and, contenting himself for the present with the ordinary hours, went light-hearted enough upon his boyish way.

A little adventure which occurred to the neophyte on his first entrance upon this new scene, produced results for him, however, which are too important to be omitted from his history. Everybody who has been in that dingiest of cities knows that the students at the University of Glasgow, small as their influence is otherwise upon the character of the town, are bound to do it one superficial service at least. Custom has ordained that they should wear red gowns; and the fatigued traveller, weary of the universal leaden grey, can alone appreciate fully the sense of gratitude and relief occasioned by the sudden gleam of scarlet fluttering up the long unlovely street on a November day. But that artistic sense which penetrates but slowly into barbarous regions has certainly not yet reached the students of Glasgow. So far from considering themselves public benefactors through the medium of their red gowns, there is no expedient of boyish ingenuity to which the ignorant youths will not resort to quench the splendid tint, and reduce its glory as nearly as possible to the sombre hue of everything around. Big Colin of Ramore was unacquainted with the tradition which made a new and brilliant specimen of the academic robe of Glasgow as irritating to the students as the colour is supposed to be to other animals of excitable temper; and the good farmer naturally arrayed his son in a new gown, glorious as any new ensign in the first delight of his uniform. As for Colin, he was far from being delighted. The terrible thought of walking through the streets in that blazing costume seriously counterbalanced all the pleasure of independence, and the pride

of being "at college." The poor boy slunk along by the least frequented way, and stole into his place the first morning like a criminal. And it was not long before Colin perceived that his new companions were of a similar opinion. There was not another gown so brilliant as his own among them all. The greater part were in the last stage of tatters and dinginess; though among a company, which included a number of lads of Colin's own age, it was evident that there must be many who wore the unvenerated costume for the first time. Dreams of rushing to the loch, which had been his immediate resource all his life hitherto, and soaking the obnoxious wrapper in the salt-water, confused his mind; but he was not prepared for the summary measures which were in contemplation. As soon as Colin emerged out of the shelter of the class-room, his persecution commenced. He was mobbed, hustled, pelted, until his spirit was roused. The gown was odious enough; but Colin was not the lad to have even the thing he most wanted imposed upon him by force. As soon as he was aware of the meaning of his tormentors, the country boy stood up for his costume. He gathered the glowing folds round him, and struck out fiercely, bringing down two or three of his adversaries. Colin, however, was alone against a multitude; and what might have happened either to himself or his dress it would have been difficult to predict, had not an unexpected defender come in to the rescue. Next to Colin in the classroom a man of about twice his age had been seated—a man of thirty, whose gaunt shoulders brushed the boy's fair locks, and whose mature and thoughtful head rose strangely over the young heads around. It was he who strode through the ring and dispersed Colin's adversaries.

"For shame o' yourselves," he said in a deep bass voice, which contrasted wonderfully with the young falsettos round him. "Leave the laddie alone; he knows no better. I'll lick ye a' for a set of schoolboys, if you don't let him be. Here, boy,

take off the red rag and throw it to me," said Colin's new champion; but the Campbell blood was up.

"I'll no take it off," cried Colin; "it's my ain, and I'll wear it if I like; and I'll fell anybody that meddles with me!"

Upon which, as was natural, a wonderful scuffle ensued. Colin never knew perfectly how he was extricated from this alarming situation; but, when he came to himself, he was in the streets on his way home, with his new friend by his side—very stiff, and aching in every limb, with one sleeve of his gown torn out, and its glory minished by the mud which had been thrown at it, but still held tightly as he had gathered it round him at the first affray. When he recovered so far as to hear some other sound besides his own panting breath, Colin discovered that the gaunt giant by his side was preaching at him in a leisurely reflective way from his eminence of six feet two or three. Big Colin of Ramore was but six feet, and at that altitude two or three inches tell. The stranger looked gigantic in his lean length as the boy looked up, half wondering, half-defiant, to hear what he was saying. What he said sounded wonderfully like preaching, so high up and so composed was the voice which kept on arguing over Colin's head, with an indifference to whether he listened or not, which, in ordinary conversation, is somewhat rare to see.

"It might be right to stand up for your gown; I'll no commit myself to say," was the first sentence of the discourse which fell on Colin's ear; "for there's no denying it was your own, and a man, or even a callant, according to the case in point, has a right to wear what he likes, if he's no under lawful authority, nor the garment offensive to decency; but it would have been more prudent on the present occasion to have taken off the red rag as I advised. It's a remnant of superstition in itself, and I'm no altogether sure that my conscience, if it was put to the question, would approve of wearing gowns at all, unless, indeed,

it had ceased to be customary to wear other garments; but that's an unlikely case, and I would not ask you to take it into consideration," said the calm voice, half a mile over Colin's head. "It's a kind of relic of the monastic system, which is out of accordance with modern ideas; but, as you're no old enough to have any opinions—"

"I have as good a right to have opinions as you," exclaimed Colin, promptly, glad of an opportunity to contradict and defy somebody, and get rid of the fumes of his excitement.

"That's no the subject under discussion," said the stranger. "I never said any man had a right to opinions; I incline to the other side of that question mysel'. The thing we were arguing was the gown. A new red gown is as aggravating to the students of Glasgow University as if they were so many bulls—no that I mean to imply that they're anything so forcible. You'll have to yield to the popular superstition if you would live in peace."

"I'm no heeding about living in peace," interrupted Colin. "I'm no feared. It's naebody's business but my ain. My gown is my gown, and I'll no change it if—"

"Let me speak," said his new friend; "you're terrible talkative for a callant. Where do you live? I'll go home with ye and argue the question. Besides, you've got a knock on the head there that wants looking to, and I suppose you're in Glasgow by yourself? You needna' thank me, it's no necessary," said the stranger, with a bland movement of the hand.

"I wasna' meaning to thank you. I'm living in Donaldson's Land, and I can take care of myself," said Colin. But the boy was no match for his experienced classfellow, who went on calmly preaching as before, arguing all kinds of questions, till the two arrived at the foot of the stairs which led to Colin's humble lodging. The stair was long, narrow, and not very clean. It bore stains of spilt milk on one flight, and long

droppings of water on another; and all the miscellaneous smells of half a dozen different households, none of them particularly dainty in their habits, were caught and concentrated in the deep well of a staircase, into which they all opened. Colin's abode was at the very top. His landlady was a poor widow, who had but three rooms, and a host of children. The smallest of the three rooms was let to Colin, and in the other two she put up somehow her own sons and daughters, and did her mantua-making, and accomplished her humble cookery. The rooms had sloping roofs and attic windows; and two chairs and a slip of carpet made Colin's apartment splendid. Colin led the way for his "friend," not without a slight sentiment of pride, which had taken the place of his first annoyance. After all, it was imposing to his imagination to have his society sought by another student, a man so much older than himself; and Colin was not unaware of the worship which it would gain him in the eyes of his hostess, who had looked on him dubiously on the day of his arrival, and designated him "little mair than a bairn." Colin was very gracious in doing the honours of his room to his unsolicited visitor, and spoke loud out that Mrs. Fergus might hear. "You'll have to stoop when you go in at *that* door," said the boy, already learning with natural art to shine in reflected glory. But Colin was less complacent when they had entered the room, half from natural shyness, half from an equally natural defiance and opposition to the grown-up and experienced person who had escorted him home.

"Well," said this strange personage, stooping grimly to contemplate himself in the little square of looking-glass which hung over Colin's table; "you and me are no very like classfellows; but I like a laddie that has some spirit and stands up for his rights. Of course you come from the country; but first come here, my boy, before you answer any questions, and let me see that knock on your head."

"I had nae intention of answering any questions; and I can take care of myself," answered Colin, hanging back and declining the invitation. The stranger, however, only smiled, stretched out his long arm, and drew the boy towards him. And certainly he had received a cut on the head which required to be attended to. Reluctant as he was, the lad was too shy to make any active resistance, even if he had possessed moral courage enough to oppose successfully the will of a man so much older than himself. He submitted to have the cut bathed and plastered up, which his new friend did with the utmost tenderness, delivering a slow and lengthy address all the while over his head. When the operation was over, Colin was more and more perplexed what to do with his visitor; though a little faint after his fight and excitement, he was still well enough to be very hungry, but the idea of asking this unknown friend to share his dinner did not occur to him. He had never done anything beyond launching the boat, or mounting the horses on his own responsibility before, and he could not tell what Mrs. Fergus would think of his wound or his visitor. Altogether, Colin was highly perplexed and not over civil, and sat down upon the edge of a chair facing the intruder with an expression of countenance very plainly intimating that he thought him much in the way.

But the stranger was much above any consideration of Colin's countenance. He was very tall, as we have said, very gaunt and meagre, with a long, pale face surmounted by black locks, thin and dishevelled. He had a black beard, too—a thing much less common at that time than now—which increased his general aspect of dishevelment. His eyes were large, and looked larger in the great sockets hollowed out by something more than years, from which they looked out as from two pale caverns; yet, with all this gauntness of aspect, his smile, when he smiled, which was seldom, threw a wonderful light over his face, and reminded Colin somehow, he could not tell how, of the sudden gleam

of the sun over the Holy Loch when the clouds were at the darkest, and melted the boy's heart in spite of himself.

"I was saying we were not very like classfellows," said the stranger; "that's a queer feature in our Scotch colleges; there's you, a great deal too young, and me, a great deal too old; and here we meet for the same purpose, to learn two dead languages and some sciences that are only half living; and that's the only way for either you or me to get ourselves made ministers. The English system's an awful deal better, I'm meaning in theory; —as for the practice, that's neither here nor there. Nothing's right in practice. It's a great thing to have a right idea at the bottom if you can."

"Are you to be a minister?" said Colin, not well knowing what to say.

"When I was like you I thought so," said his new friend; "it's a long time since then; but, when I get a good grip of an idea, it's no' easy to get it out of my head again. This is my second session only, for all that," he said, after a momentary pause; "many a thing I little thought of has stood in my way. I'm little further on than you, though I suppose I'm twice your age; but to be sure you're far too young for the college; that's what the Greek professor in Edinburgh is aye havering about; he might turn to the other side of the question if he knew me." And the stranger interrupted his own monologue to give vent to a long-drawn breath, by way of a sigh, which agitated the atmosphere in Colin's little room, as if it had been a sudden breeze.

"Mr. Hardie's son was only thirteen when he went to the college; and that's two years younger than me," said Colin, with some indignation. The lad heard a sound, as of knives and plates outside, and pricked up his ears. He was hungry, and his strange visitor seemed rooted upon his hard rush-bottomed chair. But, just as Colin's mind was framing this thought, his companion suddenly gathered himself up, rising in folds, as if there was never to be an end of him.

"You want your dinner?" he said; "come with me, it will do you good. What you were to have will keep till to-morrow; tell the decent woman so, and come with me. I'm poor, but you shall have something you can eat, and I'll show you what to do when you are tired of *her* provisions; so come along."

"I would rather stay at home," said Colin; "I don't know you, I don't know even your name," he added a minute after, feeling that he was about to yield to the strong influence which was upon him, and doing what he could to save himself.

"My name's Lauderdale; that's easy settled," said the stranger; "tell the honest woman; what's her name?—I'll do it for you. Mrs. Fergus, my young friend here is going to dinner with me. He'll be back, by-and-by, to his studies; and, in the meantime," said Colin's self-constituted guardian, putting the lad before him, and pausing in the passage to speak to the widow, who regarded his great height and strange appearance with a little curiosity, "take you charge of his gown; put it up the chimney, or give it a good wash out with soap and soda; it's too grand for Glasgow College; the sooner it comes to be like this," said the gigantic visitor, holding up his own, which was of a dingy port-wine colour, "the better for the boy."

And then Colin found himself again walking along the Glasgow streets, in the murky, early twilight of that November afternoon, with this strange unknown figure which was leading m he knew not whither. Was it a good or a bad angel which had thus taken possession of the fresh life and unoccupied mind? Colin could not resist the fascination which was half dislike and half admiration. He went along quietly by the side of the tall student, who kept delivering over his head that flood of monotonous talk. The boy grew interested even in the talk before they had gone far, and went on, a little anxious about his dinner, but still more curious concerning the companion with whom Fate had provided him so soon.

CHAPTER VI.

"No that I mean to say I believe in fate," said Lauderdale, when they had finished their meal; "though there is little doubt in my mind that what happens is ordained. I couldna tell why, for my part, though I believe in the fact—for most things in life come to nothing, and the grandest train of causes produce nae effect whatsoever; that's my experience. Indeed, it's often a wonder to me," said the homely philosopher, who was not addressing himself particularly to Colin, "what the Almighty took the trouble to make man for at a'. He's a poor creature at the best, and gives an awfu' deal of trouble for very little good. Considering all things, I'm of opinion that we're little better than an experiment,—and very likely we've been greatly improved upon in mair recent creations. Are you pleased with your dinner? You're young now, and canna' have much standing against you in the great books. Do you ever think, laddie, of what you mean to be?"

"I mean to be a minister," said Colin, with a furious blush. His thoughts on the subject, if he could but have expressed them, were magnificent enough, but nothing was more impossible to the shy country lad, than to explain the ambition which glowed in his eager, visionary mind. He would have sacrificed a finger at any time, rather than talk of the vague but splendid intentions which were fermenting secretly in absolute silence within his reserved Scotch bosom. His new friend looked with a little curiosity at the subdued brightness of the boy's eyes, which spoke more emphatically than his words.

"They a' mean to be ministers," said Lauderdale, in his reflective way; "half of them would do far better to be cobblers; but nae fool could ever be persuaded. As for you, I think there's something in you, or I wouldna have fashed my head about you and your gown. You've got a fair start, and nae drawbacks. I would like to see you go straight forward, and be good for something in your generation. You needna look glum at me; I'll never be good for much mysel'. You see I've learnt to be fond of talking," he said, philosophically; "and a man that takes up that line early in life seldom comes to much good; though I grant you there's exceptions, like Macaulay, for example. I was just entered at college, when my father died," he continued, falling into a historical strain. "I was only a laddie like yoursel', but I had to give up that thought, and work to help the rest. Now they are all scattered, and my mother dead, and I'm my own master. No that I'm much the better for that; but, you see, after I got this situation"——

"What situation?" said Colin, quickly.

"Oh, an honourable occupation," said his tall friend, with a gradually brightening smile. "There's ane of the same trade mentioned with commendation in the Acts of the Apostles. Him and St. Paul were great friends. But you see I'm free for the most part of the day; and, it being a fixed idea in my mind that I was to go to the college some time or other, it was but natural that I should enter mysel' as soon as I was able. I may go forward, and I may not; it depends on the world more than on me. So your name's Colin Campbell?—the same as Sir Colin; but, if you're to be a minister, you can never be anything mair than a minister. In any other line of life a lad can rise if he likes, but there's nae promotion possible to *that*. If I were you, and fifteen, I would choose another trade."

To this Colin answered nothing; the suggestion staggered him considerably, and he was not prepared with anything to

say. He looked round the shabby room, and watched the shabby tavern-waiter carrying his dinner to some other customer; and Colin's new and unaccustomed eyes saw something imposing even in the aspect of this poor place. He thought of the great world which seemed to surge outside in a ceaseless roar, coming and going—the world in which all sorts of honours and powers seemed to go begging, seeking owners worthy to possess them: and he was pursuing this splendid chain of possibilities, when Lauderdale resumed his monologue:—

"The Kirk's in a queer kind of condition a'thegither," said the tall student; "so are most Kirks. Whenever you hit upon a man that kens what he wants, all's well; but that happens seldom. It's no my case for one. And as for you, you're no at the age to trouble your head about doctrine. You're a young prince at your years—you don't know your privileges; you believe everything you've been brought up to believe, and are far more sure in your own mind what's false and what's true than a college of doctors. I would rather be you than a' the philosophers in the world."

"I'm no a fool to believe everything," said Colin, angrily, rousing himself up from his dreams.

"No," said his companion, "far from a fool; it's true wisdom if you could but keep it. But the present temper of the world," said the philosopher calmly, "is to conclude that there's nothing a'thegither false, and few things particularly true. When you're tired of the dinners in Donaldson's Land," he continued, without any change of tone, "and from the looks of the honest woman I would not say much for the cookery, you can come and get your dinner here. In the meantime, I'll take ye up to Buchanan Street, if you like. It's five o'clock, and the shop-windows are lighted by this time. I'm very fond of the lights in the shop-windows mysel'. When I've been a poor laddie about the streets, the lights aye looked

friendly, which is more than the folk within do when you've no siller. Come along; it's no trouble to me, and I like to have somebody to talk to," said Lauderdale.

Colin got up very reluctantly, feeling himself unable to resist the strange personal fascination thus exercised over him. The idea of being only somebody to talk to mortified the boy's pride, but he could not shake himself free from the influence which had taken possession of him. He was only fifteen, and his companion was thirty; and he had no power to enfranchise himself. He went after the tall figure into the street with very mingled feelings. The stream of talk, which kept flowing on above him, stimulated Colin's mind into the most vigorous action. Such talk was not incomprehensible to a boy who had been trained at Ramore; but the philosophers of the Holy Loch were orthodox, and this specimen of impartial thoughtfulness roused all the fire of youthful polemics in Colin's bosom. He set down his companion unhesitatingly, of course, as a "sceptic," perhaps an infidel; and was already longing to rush in upon him, with arbitrary boyish zeal and disdain, to make an end on the spot of his mistaken opinions. As for Colin himself, he was very sure of everything, as was natural to his years, and had never entertained any doubts that the Shorter Catechism was as infallible a standard of truth, as it was a terrible infliction upon the youthful memory. Colin went along the murky streets, by his companion's side, thinking within himself that, perhaps, his own better arguments and higher reason might convert this mistaken man, and listened to him eagerly as they proceeded together along the long line of the Trongate, much excited by his own intentions, and feeling somehow, in his boyish heart, that this universal stimulation of everything, within and without, was a real beginning of life. For everything was new to the country boy, who had never in his life before been out of doors at night, anywhere, save in

the silent country roads, through darkness lighted by the moon, or, when there was no moon, by the pale glimmer of the loch. Now his eyes were dazzled by the lights, and all his senses kept in exercise by the necessity of holding his own way, and resisting the pressure of the human current which flowed past him; while Lauderdale kept talking of a hundred things which were opposed to his boyish belief, and which, amid all this unaccustomed hubbub, he had to listen to with all his might lest he should lose the thread of the argument—a loose thread enough, certainly, but still with some coherence and connexion. All this made Colin's heart thrill with a warmer consciousness of life. He was only in Glasgow, among floods of dusky craftsmen going home from their work; but it appeared to his young eyes that he had suddenly fallen upon the most frequented ways of life and into the heart of the vast world.

"I'm fond of a walk in the Trongate mysel', especially when the lamps are lighted," said Lauderdale; "I never heard of a philosopher but was. No that I am much of a philosopher, but—. It's here ye see the real aspect of human affairs. Here, take the shopwindows, or take the passengers, there's little to be seen but what's necessary to life; but yonder," said the reflective student, pointing over Colin's head to the street they were approaching, "there's nothing but luxury. We spend a great deal of siller in Glasgow—we're terrible rich, some of us, and like the best of everything—but there's no so much difference as you would think. I have no pleasure in that side of wealth for my part; there's an awful suggestion of eating and drinking in everything about there. Even the grand furniture and the pictures have a kind of haze about them, as if ye could only see them through a dinner. I don't pretend to have any knowledge for my own part of rich men's feasts; but it's no pleasant to think that Genius and Art, no to speak of a great

deal of skilful workmanship, should be all subservient to a man's pleasure in his dinner, and that *that's* what they're here for. Hallo, laddie, I thought you had no friends in Glasgow? there's somebody yonder waving their hands to you. What do you hang back for? it's a lady in a carriage. Have you no respect for yoursel' that you're so slow to answer?" cried Colin's monitor, indignantly. Colin would gladly have sunk through the pavement, or darted up a friendly dark alley which presented itself close by, but such an escape was not possible. It was Lady Frankland who was making signals to him out of the carriage-window, and with all his awkwardness, he was obliged to obey them.

As for Lauderdale, whose curiosity was considerably excited, he betook himself to the window of a printshop to await his *protégé*, not without some surprise in his mind. He knew pretty nearly as much about Colin by this time as the boy himself did, though Colin was quite unaware of having opened up his personal history to his new friend; but he had heard nothing about young Frankland, that being an episode in his life of which the country lad was not proud. Lauderdale stood at the printshop-window with a curious kind of half-pathetic egotism mingling with his kindly observation. No fair vision of women ever gleamed across *his* firmament. He was just about shaking hands with youth, and no lady's face had ever bent over him like a star out of the firmament, as the gracious countenance of the English lady was just then bending over the farmer's son from Ramore. "It's maybe the Duchess," said Lauderdale to himself, thinking of the natural feudal princess of the lochs; and he looked with greater interest still, withdrawn out of hearing, but near enough to see all that passed. Colin for his part did not know in the least what to say or to do. He stood before the carriage looking sulky in the excess of his embarrassment, and did not even take off his cap to salute the lady, as

country politeness and his anxious mother had taught him. And, to aggravate the matter, there was a bewildering little girl in the carriage with Lady Frankland—a creature with glorious curls over her shoulders, and a wonderful perfection of juvenile toilette, which somehow dazzled Colin's unused and ignorant eyes. In the midst of his awkwardness it occurred to the boy to note this little lady's dress, which was a strange thing enough for him, who did not know one article of feminine attire from another. It was not her beauty so much as the delicacy of all her little equipments which amazed Colin, and prevented him from hearing what Lady Frankland had to say.

"So you have gone to the University?" said that gracious lady. "You are ever so much further advanced than Harry, who is only a schoolboy as yet; but the Scotch are so clever. You will be glad to hear that dear Harry is quite well, and enjoying himself very much at Eton," continued Harry's mother, who meant to be very kind to the boy who had saved her son's life. Now the very name of Harry Frankland had, he could not have told how, a certain exasperating effect upon Colin. He said nothing in answer to this satisfactory intelligence, but unconsciously gave a little frown of natural opposition, which Lady Frankland's eyes were not sufficiently interested to see.

"He doesn't care for Harry, aunt," said the miniature woman by Lady Frankland's side, darting out of the dusky twilight a sudden flash of perception, under which Colin stood convicted. She was about his own age, but a world in advance of him in every other respect. A little amusement and a little offence were in the voice, which seemed to Colin, with its high-bred accent and wonderful "English," like the voice of another kind of creature from any he had encountered before. Was she a little witch, to know what he was thinking? And then a little laugh of triumph rounded off the sentence, and the unfortunate boy stood more speechless, more awkward, more incapable than before.

"Nonsense, Matty; when you know we owe Harry's life to him," said bland Lady Frankland. "You must come and dine with us to-morrow; indeed you must. Sir Thomas and I are both so anxious to know more of you. Sir Thomas would be so pleased to forward your views in any way; but the Scotch are so independent," she said, with her most flattering smile. "Was that your tutor who was walking with you, that very tall man? I am sure we should be delighted to see him too. I suppose he is something in the University. Oh! here comes my husband. Sir Thomas, this is—Oh! I am sure I beg your pardon; I forget your name—the dear, brave, excellent boy who saved Harry's life."

Upon which Sir Thomas, coming out of one of the shops, in that radiance of cleanness and neatness, perfectly brushed whiskers, and fresh face, which distinguishes his class, shook hands heartily with the reluctant Colin.

"To be sure, he must dine with us to-morrow," said the good-humoured baronet, "and bring his tutor if he likes; but I thought you had no tutors at the Scotch Universities. I want to know what you're about, and what your ideas are on a great many subjects, my fine fellow. Your father is tremendously proud, and so are you, I suppose; but he's a capital specimen of a man; and I hope you allow that I have a right to recollect such an obligation. Good-bye, my boy," said Sir Thomas. "Seven to-morrow—but I'll probably be at your college and see you in the morning. And mind you bring the tutor," he cried, as the carriage drove off. Lady Frankland shed a perfect blaze of smiles upon Colin, as she waved her hand to him, and the creature with the curls on the other side gave the boy a little nod in a friendly condescending way. He made a spring back into the shade the minute after, wonderfully glad to escape, but dazzled and excited in spite of himself; and, as he retired rapidly from the scene of this unexpected encounter, he came sharp up

against Lauderdale, who was coming to meet him, with his curiosity largely excited.

"It was me he took for the tutor, I suppose?" said the strange Mentor who had thus taken possession of Colin; and the tall student laughed with a kind of quaint gratification. "And so I might have been if I had been bred up at Oxford or Cambridge," he added, after a moment; "that is to say, if it had been my lot to be bred up anywhere; but they've a grand system in these English universities. *That* was not the Duke," he said interrogatively, looking at Colin, whose blood of clansman boiled at the idea.

"*That* the Duke!" exclaimed the boy with great disdain; "no more than I am. It's one of the English that are aye coming and making their jokes about the rain; as if anybody wanted them to come," said Colin, with an outbreak of scorn; and then the boy remembered that Archie Candlish had just bought a house in expectation of such visitors, and stopped abruptly in full career. "I suppose the English are awfu' fond of grouse, or they wouldna' come so far for two or three birds," he continued, in a tone of milder sarcasm. But his companion was not to be so easily diverted from his questions.

"Grouse is a grand institution, and helps in the good government of this country," said Lauderdale, "and, through this country, of the world—which is a fine thought for a bit winged creature, if it had the sense to ken. Yon's another world," he said, after a little pause, "no Paradise to be sure, but something as far removed from this as Heaven itself; farther, you might say, for there's many a poor man down below here that's hovering on the edge of heaven. And how came you to have such grand friends?" asked the self-constituted guardian, stooping from his lofty height to look straight into Colin's eyes. After a time, he extracted the baldest narrative that ever was uttered by a hero ashamed of his prowess from the half-indignant boy, and managed

to guess as clearly as the wonderful little lady in the carriage the nature of Colin's sentiments towards the young antagonist and rival whom he had saved.

"I wouldna have let a dog drown," said the aggrieved Colin; "there was nothing to make a work about. But you would have laughed to see that fellow, with his boots like a lassie's and feared to wet his feet. He could swim, though," added the boy, candidly; "and I would like to beat him," he said, after a moment; "I'd like to run races with him for something, and win the prize over his head."

This was all Colin permitted himself to say; but the vehement sentiment thus recalled to his mind made him, for the moment, less attentive to Lauderdale, who, for his part, was considerably moved by his young companion's excitement. "I'm not going to see your fine friends," he said, as he parted from the boy at the "stairfoot" which led to Colin's lodging; "but there's many a true word spoken in jest, and, my boy, you shall not want a tutor, though there's no such thing in our Scotch colleges."

When he had said so much, hastily, as a man does who is conscious of having shown a little emotion in his words, Colin's new friend went away, disappearing through the misty night, gaunt and lean as another Quixote. "I should like to have something to do with the making of a new life," he said to himself, muttering high up in the air over the ordinary passengers' heads, as he mused on upon his way. And Colin and his story had struck the rock in the heart of the lonely man, and drawn forth fresh streams in that wilderness. He was more moved in his imaginative, reflective soul, than he could have told any one, with, half-consciously to himself, a sense of contrast, which was natural enough, considering all things, and which coloured all his thoughts, more or less, for that night.

As for Colin—naturally, too—he thought no more of Lauderdale, nor of his parting words, and found himself in no need of

any tutor or guide, but fell asleep in the midst of his Greek, as was to be expected, and dreamt of that creature with the curls nodding at him out of gorgeous Lord Mayor's coaches, in endless procession. And it was with this wonderful little vision dancing about his fancy that the Scotch boy ended his first day at the University, knowing no more what was to come of it all than the saucy sparrow which woke him next morning by loud chirping in the Glasgow dialect at his quaint little attic window. The sparrow had his crumbs, and Colin had another exciting day before him, and went out quite calmly to lay his innocent hands upon the edge-tools which were to carve out his life.

CHAPTER VII.

WONDERS come natural at fifteen; the farmer's son of Ramore, though a little dazzled at the moment, was by no means thrown off his balance by the flattering attentions of Lady Frankland, who said everything that was agreeable and forgot that she had said it, and went over the same ground again half a dozen times, somewhat to the contempt of Colin, who knew nothing about fine ladies, but had all a boy's disdain for a silly woman. Thanks to his faculty of silence, and his intense pride, Colin conducted himself with great external propriety when he dined with his new friends. Nobody knew the fright he was in, nor the strain of determination not to commit himself, which was worthy of something more important than a dinner. But after all, though it shed a reflected glory over his path for a short time, Sir Thomas Frankland's dinner and all its bewildering accessories was but an affair of a day, and the only real result it left behind was a conviction in the mind of Lauderdale that his young *protégé* was born to better fortune. From that day the tall student hovered, benignly reflective, like a tall genie over Colin's boyish career. He was the boy's tutor so far as that was possible where the teacher was himself but one step in advance of the pupil; and as to matters speculative and philosophical, Lauderdale's monologue, delivered high up in the air over his head, became the accompaniment and perpetual stimulation of all Colin's thoughts. The training was strange, but by no means unnatural, nor out of harmony with the habits of the boy's previous life, for much homely philosophy was current at

Ramore, and Colin had been used to receive all kinds of comments upon human affairs with his daily bread. Naturally enough, however, the sentiments of thirty and those of fifteen were not always harmonious, and the impartial and tolerant thoughtfulness of his tall friend much exasperated Colin in the absolutism of his youth.

"I'm a man of the age," Lauderdale would say as they traversed the crowded streets together; "by which I am claiming no superiority over you, callant, but far the contrary, if you were but wise enough to ken. I've fallen into the groove like the rest of mankind, and think in limits as belongs to my century —which is but a poor half-and-half kind of century, to say the best of it—but you are of all the ages, and know nothing about limits or possibilities. Don't interrupt me," said the placid giant; "you are far too talkative for a laddie, as I have said before. I tell you I'm a man of the age: I've no very particular faith in anything. In a kind of a way, everything's true; but you needna tell me that a man that believes like *that* will never make much mark in this world or any other world I ever heard tell of. I know that, a great deal better than you do. The best thing you can do is to contradict me; it's good for you, and it does me no harm."

Colin acted upon this permission to the full extent of all his youthful prowess and prejudices, and went on learning his Latin and Greek, and discussing all manner of questions in heaven and earth, with the fervour of a boy and a Scotsman. They kept together, this strange pair, for the greater part of the short winter days, taking long walks, when they left the University, through the noisy dirty streets, upon which Lauderdale moralized; and sometimes through the duller squares and crescents of respectability which formed the frame of the picture. Sometimes their peregrinations concluded in Colin's little room, where they renewed their arguments over the oatcakes and cheese which

came in periodical hampers from Ramore; and sometimes Lauderdale gave his friend a cheap and homely dinner at the tavern where they had first broken bread together. But not even Colin, much less any of his less familiar acquaintances, knew where the tall Mentor lived, or how he managed to maintain himself at college. He said he had his lodging provided for him, when any inquiry was made, and added, with an odd humourous look, that his was an honourable occupation; but Lauderdale afforded no further clue to his own means or dwelling-place. He smiled, but he was secret and gave no sign. As for his studies, he made but such moderate progress in them as was natural to his age and his character. No particular spur of ambition seemed to stimulate the man whose habits were formed by this time, and who found enjoyment enough, it appeared, in universal speculation. When he failed, his reflections as to the effect of failure upon the mind of man, and the secondary importance after all of mere material success, "which always turns out more disappointing to a reflective spirit than an actual break-down," the philosopher would say, "being aye another evidence how far reality falls short of the idea," became more piquant than usual; and when he succeeded, the same sentiments moderated his satisfaction. "Oh ay, I've got the prize," he said, holding it on a level with Colin's head, and regarding its resplendent binding with a smile; "which is to say, I've found out that it's only a book with the college arms stamped upon it, and no a palpable satisfaction to the soul as I might have imagined it to be, had it been yours, boy, instead of mine."

But with all this composure of feeling as respected his own success, Lauderdale was as eager as a boy about the progress of his pupil. When the prize lay in Colin's way, his friend spared no pains to stimulate and encourage and help him on; and as the years passed, and the personal pride of the elder became involved in the success of the younger, Lauderdale's anxieties

awoke a certain impatience in the bosom of his *protégé*. Colin was ambitious enough in his own person, but he turned naturally with sensitive boyish pride against the arguments and inducements which had so little influence upon the speaker himself.

"You urge *me* on," he would say, "but you think it does not matter for yourself." And though it was Colin's third session, and he reckoned himself a man when he said this, he was jealous to think that Lauderdale urged upon him what he did not think it worth his while to practise in his own person.

"When a thing's spoilt in the making, it matters less what use ye put it to," said the philosopher. It was a bright day in March, and they were seated on the grass together in a corner of the Green, looking at the pretty groups about, of women and children—children and women, perhaps not over tidy, if you looked closely into the matter, but picturesque to look at—some watching the patches of white linen bleaching on the grass, and some busily engaged over their needlework. The tall student stretched his long limbs on the grass, and watched the people about with reflective eyes. "There's nothing in this world so important to a man as a right beginning," he went on. "As for me, I'm all astray, and can never win to any certain end—no that I'm complaining, or taking a gloomy view of things in general; I'm just as happy in my way as other folk are in theirs—but that's no the question under discussion. When a man reaches my years without coming to anything he'll never come to much all his days; but you're only a callant, and have all the world before you, said Lauderdale. He did not look at Colin as he spoke, but went on in his usual monotone, looking into the blue air, in which he saw much that was not visible to the eager young eyes which kept gazing at him. "When I was like you," he continued, with a half-pathetic, half-humourous smile, "it looked like misery and despair to feel that I was not to get my own way in this world. I'm terrible indifferent

now-a-days—one kind of life is just as good as another as long as a man has something to do that he can think to be his duty; but such thoughts are no for you," said Colin's tutor, waking up suddenly. "For you, laddie, there's nothing grand in the world that should not be possible. The lot that's accomplished is aye more or less a failure; but there's always something splendid in the life that is to come."

"You talk to me as if I were a child," said Colin, with a little indignation; "you see things in their true light yourself, but you treat me like a baby. What can there be that is splendid in my life?—a farmer's son, with perhaps the chance of a country church for my highest hope—after all kinds of signings, and confessions, and calls, and presbyteries. It would be splendid, indeed," said the lad, with boyish contempt, "to be plucked by a country presbytery that don't know six words of Greek, or objected to by a congregation of ploughmen—that's all a man has to look for in the Church of Scotland, and you know it, Lauderdale, as well as I do."

Colin broke off suddenly, with a considerable show of heat and impatience. He was eighteen, and he was of the advanced party, the Young Scotland of his time. The dogmatic Old Scotland, which loved to bind, and limit, and make confessions, and sign the same, belonged to the past centuries. As for Colin's set, they were "viewy" as the young men at Oxford used to be in the days of Froude and Newman. Colin's own "views" were of a vague description enough, but of the most revolutionary tendency. He did not believe in Presbytery, nor in that rule of Church government which in Scotland is known as Lord Aberdeen's Act; and his ideas respecting extempore worship and common prayer were much unsettled. But as neither Colin nor his set had any distinct model to fall back upon, nor any clear perception of what they wanted, the present result of their enlightenment was simply the unpleasant one of general

discontent with existing things, and a restless contempt for the necessary accessories of their lot.

"Plucked is no a word in use in Scotland," said Lauderdale; "it smacks of the English universities, which are altogether a different matter. As for the Westminster Confession, I'm no clear that I could put my name to that myself as my act and deed—but you are but a callant, and don't know your own mind as yet. Meaning no offence to you," he continued, waving his hand to Colin, who showed signs of impatience, "I was once a laddie myself. Between eighteen and eight-and-twenty you'll change your ways of thinking, and neither you nor me can prophesy what they'll end in. As for the congregation of ploughmen, I would be very easy about you if that was the worst danger. Men that are about day and night in the fields when all's still, cannot but have thoughts in their minds now and then. But it's no what you are going to be, I'm thinking of," said Colin's counsellor, raising himself from the grass with a spark of unusual light in his eyes, "but what you *might* be, laddie. It's no a great preacher, far less what they call a popular minister, that would please me. What I'm thinking of is, the Man that is aye to be looked for, but never comes. I'm speaking like a woman, and thinking like a woman,' he said, with a smile; "they have a kind of privilege to keep their ideal. For my part, I ought to have more sense, if experience counted for anything; but I've no faith in experience. And, speaking of that," said the philosopher, dropping back again softly on the greensward, "what a grand outlet for what I'm calling the ideal was that old promise of the Messias who was to come! It may still be so for anything I can tell, though I cannot say that I put much trust in the Jews. But aye to be able to hope that the next new soul might be the One that was above failure, must have been a wonderful solace to them that had failed and lost heart. To be sure, they missed Him when He came,"

continued Lauderdale; "that was natural. Human nature is aye defective in action; but a grand idea like that makes all the difference between us and the beasts, and would do, if there were a hundred theories of development—which I would not have you put faith in, laddie," continued the volunteer tutor. "Steam and iron make awful progress, but no man—"

"That is one of your favourite theories," said Colin, who was ready for any amount of argument; "though iron and steam are dead and stationary, but for the mind which is always developing. What you say is a kind of paradox; but you like paradoxes, Lauderdale."

"Everything's a paradox," said the reflective giant, getting up slowly from the turf; "and the grass is damp, and the wind's cold, and I don't mean to sit here and haver nonsense any longer. Come along, and I'll see you home. What I like women for is, that they're seldom subject to the real, or convinced by what you callants call reason. Reason and reality are terrible fictions at the bottom. I never believe in facts, for my part. The worst of it is, that a woman's ideal is apt to look a terrible idiot when she sets it up before the world," continued Lauderdale, his face brightening gradually with one of his slow smiles. "The ladies' novels are instructive on that point. But there's few things in this world so pleasant as to have a woman at hand that believes in you," he said, suddenly breaking off in his discourse at an utterly unexpected moment. Colin was startled by the unlooked-for silence, and by the sound of something like a sigh which disturbed the air over his head; and being still but a boy, and not superior to mischief, looked up, with a little laughter.

"You must have once had a woman who believed in you, or you would not speak so feelingly," said the lad, in his youthful amusement; and then Colin, too, stopped short, having encountered quite an unaccustomed look in his companion's face.

"Ay," said Lauderdale, and then there was a pause. "If it

were not that life is aye a failure, there would be some cases harder than could be borne," he continued, after a moment; "no that I'm complaining; but if I were you, laddie, I would set my face dead against fortune, and make up my mind to win. And speaking of winning, when did you hear of your grand English friends, and the callant you picked out of the loch? Have they ever been here in Glasgow again?"

At which question Colin drew himself to his full height, as he always did at Harry Frankland's name; he was ashamed now to express his natural antagonism to the English lad in frank speech as he had been used to do, but he insensibly elevated his head, which, when he did not stoop, as he had a habit of doing, began to approach much more nearly than of old to the altitude of his friend's.

"I know nothing about their movements," he said, shortly. "As for winning, I don't see what connexion there can be between the Franklands and any victory of mine. You don't suppose Miss Matilda believes in me, do you?" said Colin, with an uneasy laugh; "for that would be a mistake," he continued, a moment after. "She believes in her cousin."

"Maybe," said Lauderdale, in his oracular way, "it's an uncanny kind of relationship upon the whole; but I would not be the one to answer for it, especially if it's him she's expected to believe in. But there were no Miss Matildas in my mind," he added, with a smile. "I'll no ask what she had to do in yours, for you're but a callant, as I have to remind you twenty times in a day. But such lodgers are no to be encouraged," said Colin's adviser, with seriousness; "when they get into a young head it's hard to get them out again; and the worst of them is, that they take more room than their fair share. Have you got your essay well in hand for the Principal? That's more to the purpose than Miss Matilda; and now the end of the session's drawing near, and I'm a thought anxious about the philosophy

class. Yon Highland colt with the red hair will run you close, if you don't take heed. It's no prizes I'm thinking upon," said Lauderdale; "it's the whole plan of the campaign. I'll come up and talk it all over again, if you want advice; but I've great confidence in your own genius." As he said this, he laid his hand upon the lad's shoulder and looked down into his eyes. "Summer's the time to dream," said the tall student, with a smile and a sigh. Perhaps he had given undue importance to the name of Miss Matilda. He looked into the fresh young face with that mixture of affection and pathos—ambition for the lad, mingled with a generous, tender envy of him—which all along had moved the elder man in his intercourse with Colin. The look for once penetrated through the mists of custom and touched the boy's heart.

"You are very good to me, Lauderdale," he said, with a little effusion; at the sound of which words his friend grasped his shoulder affectionately and went off, without saying anything more, into the dingy Glasgow streets. Colin himself paused a minute to watch the tall, retreating figure before he climbed his own tedious stair. "Summer's the time to dream," he repeated to himself, with a certain brightness in his face, and went up the darkling staircase three steps at a time, stimulated most probably by some thoughts more exciting than anything connected with college prizes or essays. It was the end of March and already now and then a chance breeze whispered to Colin that the primroses had begun to peep out about the roots of the trees in all the soft glens of the Holy Loch. It had only been in the previous spring that primroses became anything more to Colin than they were to Peter Bell; but now the youth's eyes were anointed—he had begun to write poetry, and to taste the delights of life. Though he had already learned to throw a very transparent vein of pretended sadness upon his verses, it did not occur to Colin as possible that the life which was so

sweet one year might not be equally delightful the next, or that anything could occur to deprive him of the companionship he was looking forward to. He had never received any shock yet in his youthful certainty of pleasure, and did not stop to think that the chance which brought Sir Thomas Frankland's nursery, and with it his pretty niece, to the Castle, for all the long spring and summer, might never recur again. So he went upstairs three steps at a time, in the dingy twilight, and sat down to his essay, raising now and then triumphant, youthful eyes, which surveyed the mean walls and poor little room without seeing anything of their poverty, and making all his young, arrogant, absolute philosophy sweet with thoughts of the primroses, and the awaking waters, and the other human creature, the child-Eve of the boy's Paradise. This was how Colin managed to compose the essay, which drew tears of mingled laughter and emotion from Lauderdale's eyes, and dazzled the professor himself with its promise of eloquence, and secured the prize in the philosophy class. The Highland colt with the red hair, who was Colin's rival, was very much sounder in his views, and had twenty times more logic in his composition; but the professor was dazzled, and the class itself could scarcely forbear its applause. Colin went home accordingly covered with glory. He was nearly nineteen; he was one of the most promising students of the year; he had already distinguished himself sufficiently to attract the attention of people interested in college successes; and he had all the long summer before him, and no one could tell how many rambles about the glens, how many voyages across the loch, how many researches into the wonders of the hills. He bade farewell to Lauderdale with a momentary seriousness, but forgot before the smoke of Glasgow was out of sight that he had ever parted from anybody, or that all his friends were not awaiting him in this summer of delight.

CHAPTER VIII.

"COME away into the fire; it's bonnie weather, but it's sharp on the hillside," said the mistress of Ramore. "I never wearied for you, Colin, so much as I've done this year. No that there was ony particular occasion, for we've a' been real weel, and a good season, and baith bairns and beasts keeping their health; but the heart's awfu' capricious, and canna hear reason. Come in bye to the fire."

"There's been three days of east wind," said the farmer, who had gone across the loch to meet his son, and bring him home in triumph, "which accounts for your mother's anxiety, Colin. When there's plenty of blue sky, and the sun shining, there's naething she hasna courage for. What's doing in Glasgow? or rather what's doing at the college? or maybe, if you insist upon it, what are *you* doing? for that's the most important to us."

To which Colin, who was almost as shy of talking of his own achievements as of old, gave for answer some bald account of the winding up of the session, and of his own honours. "I told you all about it in my last letter," he said, hurrying over the narrative; "there was nothing out of the common. Tell me rather all the news of the parish. Who is at home and who is away, and if any of the visitors have come yet?" said the lad, with a conscious tremor in his voice. Most likely his mother understood what he meant.

"It's ower early for visitors yet," she said, "though I think for my part there's nothing like the spring, with the days

lengthening, and the light aye eking and eking itself out. To be sure, there's the east winds, which are a sore drawback, but they have nae great effect on the west coast. The castle woods are wonderful bonnie, Colin; near as bonnie as they were last year, when a' thae bright English bairnies made the place look cheerful. I wonder the Earl bides there so seldom himself. He's no rich, to be sure, but it's a moderate kind of a place. If I had enough money I would rather live there than in the Queen's palace, and so the minister says. You'll have to go down to the manse the morn, and tell him a' about your prizes, Colin," said his proud mother, looking at him with beaming eyes. She put her hand upon her boy's shoulder, and patted him softly as he stood beside her. "He takes a great interest in what you're doing at the college," she continued; "he says you're a credit to the parish, and so I hope you'll aye be," said Mrs. Campbell. She had not any doubt on the subject so far as her own convictions went.

"He does not know me," said the impatient Colin; "but I'll go to the manse to-morrow if you like. It's halfway to the castle," he said, under his breath, and then felt himself colour, much to his annoyance, under his mother's eyes.

"There's plenty folk to visit," said the farmer. "As for the castle, it's out of our way, no to say it looked awfu' doleful the last time I was by. The factor would get it but for the name of the thing. We've had a wonderful year, take it a'thegither, and the weather is promising for the season. If you're no over-grand with all your honours, I would be glad of your advice, as soon as you've rested, about the Easter fields. I'm thinking of some changes, and there's nae time to lose."

"If you would but let the laddie take breath!" said the farmer's wife. "New out of all his toils and his troubles, and you canna refrain from the Easter fields. It's my belief," said the mistress, with a little solemnity, "that prosperity is awfu'

trying to the soul. I dinna think you ever cared for siller, Colin, till now; but instead of rejoicing in your heart over the Almighty's blessing, I hear nothing, from morning to night, but about mair profit. It's no what I've been used to," said Colin's mother, "and there's mony a thing mair important that I want to hear about. Eh! Colin, it's my hope you'll no get to be over-fond of this world!"

"If this world meant no more than a fifty pound or so in the bank," said big Colin, with a smile; "but there's no denying it's a wonderful comfort to have a bit margin, and no be aye from hand to mouth. As soon as your mother's satisfied with looking at you, you can come out to me, Colin, and have a look at the beasts. It's a pleasure to see them. Apart from profit, Jeanie," said the farmer, with his humorous look, "if you object to that, it's grand to see such an improvement in a breed of living creatures that you and me spend so much of our time among. Next to bonnie bairns, bonnie cattle's a reasonable pride for a farmer, no to say but that making siller in any honest way is as laudable an occupation as I ken for a man with a family like me."

"If it doesna take up your heart," said the mistress. "But it's awfu' to hear folk how they crave siller for siller's sake; especially in a place like this, where there's aye strangers coming and going, and a' body's aye trying how much is to be got for everything. I promised the laddies a holiday the morn to hear a' Colin's news, and you're no to take him off to byres and ploughed land the very first day;—though I dinna say but I would like him to see Gowan's calf," said the farmer's wife, yielding a little in her superior virtue. As for Colin, he sat very impatiently through this conversation, vainly attempting to bring in the question which he longed, yet did not like, to ask.

"I suppose the visitors will come early, as the weather is so fine?" he ventured to say as soon as there was a pause.

"Oh, ay, the Glasgow folk," said Mrs. Campbell; and she gave a curious inquiring glance at her son, who was looking out of the window with every appearance of abstraction. "Do you know anybody that's coming, Colin?" said the anxious mother; "some of your new friends?" And Colin was so sensible of her look, though his eyes were turned in exactly the opposite direction, that his face grew crimson up to the great waves of brown hair which were always tumbling about his forehead. He thrust his heavy lovelocks off his temples with an impatient hand, and got up and went to the window that his confusion might not be visible. Big Colin of Ramore was at the window too, darkening the apartment with his great bulk, and the farmer laid his hand on his son's shoulder with a homely roughness, partly assumed to conceal his real feeling.

"How tall are you, laddie? no much short of me now," he said. "Look here, Jeanie, at your son." Then the mistress put down her work, and came up to them, defeating all Colin's attempts to escape her look; but in the meantime she, too, forgot the blushes of her boy in the pleasant sight before her. She was but a little woman herself, considered in the country-side rather too soft and delicate for a farmer's wife; and with all the delicious confidence of love and weakness, the tender woman looked up at her husband and her son.

"Young Mr. Frankland's no half so tall as Colin," said the proud mother; "no that height is anything to brag about unless a' things else is conformable. He's weel enough, and a strong-built callant, but there's a great difference; though, to be sure, his mother is just as proud," said the mistress, bearing her conscious superiority with meekness; "it's a grand thing that we're a' best pleased with our ain."

"When did you see young Frankland?" said Colin, hastily. The two boys had scarcely met since the encounter which had made a link between the families without awaking very

friendly sentiments in the bosoms of the two persons principally concerned.

"That's a thing to be discussed hereafter," said the farmer of Ramore. "I didna mean to say onything about it till I saw what your inclinations were, but women-folk are aye hasty. Sir Thomas has made me a proposition, Colin. He would like to send you to Oxford with his own son if you and me were to consent. We're to gie him an answer when we've made up our minds. Nae doubt he has heard that you were like enough to be a creditable protejee," said Big Colin, with natural complacency. "A lad of genius gies distinction to his patron—if ye can put up with a patron, Colin."

"Can *you?*" cried his son. The lad was greatly agitated by the question. Ambitious Scotch youths of Colin's type, in the state of discontent which was common to the race, had come to look upon the English universities as the goal of all possible hopes. Not that Colin would have confessed as much had his fate depended on it—but such was the fact notwithstanding. Oxford, to his mind, meant any or every possibility under heaven, without any limit to the splendour of the hopes involved. A different kind of flush, the glow of eagerness and ambition, suddenly covered his face. But joined with this came a tumult of vague but burning offence and contradiction. While he recognised the glorious chance thus opened to him, pride started up to bolt and bar those gates of hope. He turned upon his father with something like anger in his voice, with a tantalizing sense of all the advantages thus flourished wantonly, as he thought, before his eyes. "Could *you* put up with a patron?" he repeated, looking almost fiercely in the farmer's face; "and if not, why do you ask me such a question?" When he came to think of it, Colin felt injured by the suggestion. To be offered the thing of all others he most desired in the world, by means which made it impossible to accept the offer would have been

galling enough under any circumstances; but just now, at this crisis of his youthful ambition and excitement, such a tantalizing glimpse of the possible and the impossible was beyond bearing. "Are we his dependents that he makes such an offer to me?" said the exasperated youth; and Big Colin himself looked on with a little surprise at his son's excitement, comprehending only partially what it meant.

"I'll no say I'm fond of patronage," said the farmer, slowly; "neither in the kirk nor out of the kirk. It's my opinion a man does aye best that fights his own way; but there's aye exceptions, Colin. I wouldna have you make up your mind in any arbitrary way. As for Sir Thomas, he has aye been real civil and friendly—no one of your condescending fine gentlemen—and the son—"

"What right have I to any favour from Sir Thomas?" cried Colin. "He is nothing to me. I did no more for young Frankland than I would have done for any dog on the hillside," he continued, with a contemptuous tone; and then his conscience reproved him. "I don't mean to say anything against *him*. He behaved like a man, and saved himself," said Colin, with haughty candour. "As for all this pretence of rewarding me, it feels like an insult. I want nothing at their hands."

"There's no occasion to be violent," said the farmer. "I dinna expect that he'll use force to make you accept his offer, which is weel meant and kind, whatever else it may be. I canna say I understand a' this fury on your part; and there's no good that I can see in deciding this very moment and no other. I would like you to sleep upon it and turn it over in your mind. Such an offer doesna come every day to the Holy Loch. I'm no the man to seek help," said Big Colin, "but there's times when it's more generous to receive than to give."

The mistress had followed her son wistfully with her eyes through all his changes of countenance and gesture. She was

not simply surprised like her husband, but looked at him with unconscious insight, discovering by intuition what was in his heart—something, at least, of what was in his heart—for the anxious mother too was mistaken, and rushed at conclusions which Colin himself was far from having reached.

"There's plenty of time to decide," said the farmer's wife; "and I've that confidence in my laddie that I ken he'll do nothing from a poor motive, nor out of a jealous heart. There never were ony sulky ways, that ever I saw, in ony bairn of mine," said Mrs. Campbell; "and if there was one in the world that was mair fortunate than me, I wouldna show a poor spirit towards him, because he had won. Whiles it's mair generous to receive than to give, as the maister says; and whiles it's mair noble to lose than to win," said the mistress, with a momentary faltering of emotion in her voice. She thought the bitterness of hopeless love was in her boy's heart, and that he was tempted to turn fiercely from the friendship of his successful rival. And she lifted her soft eyes, which were beaming with all the magnanimous impulses of nature, to Colin's face, who did not comprehend the tenderness of pity with which his mother regarded him. But, at least, he perceived that something much higher and profounder than anything he was thinking of was in the mistress's thoughts; and he turned away somewhat abashed from her anxious look.

"I am not jealous that I am aware of," said Colin; "but I have never done anything to deserve this, and I should prefer not to accept any favours from—any man," he concluded abruptly. That was how they left the discussion for that time at least. When the farmer went out to look after his necessary business, his wife remained with Colin, looking at him often, as she glanced up from her knitting, with eyes of wistful wonder. Had she been right in her guess, or was it merely a vague sentiment of repulsion which kept him apart from young Frank-

land? But all the mother's anxiety could not break through the veil which separates one mysterious individuality from another. She read his looks with eager attention, half right and half wrong, as people make out an unfamiliar language. He had drifted off somehow from the plain vernacular of his boyish thoughts, and she had not the key to the new complications. So it was with a mixed and doubtful joy that the mistress of Ramore, on the first night of his return, regarded her son.

"And I suppose," said Colin, with a smile dancing about his lips, "that I am to answer this proposal when they come to the castle? And they are coming soon as they expected last year? or, perhaps, they are there now?" he said, getting up from his chair again and walking away towards the door that his mother might not see the gleam of expectation in his face.

"But, Colin, my man," said the mistress, who did not perceive the blow she was about to administer, "they're no coming to the castle this year. The young lady that was delicate has got well, and they're a' in London and in an awfu' whirl o' gaiety like the rest of their kind; and Lady Mary, the earl's sister, is to have the castle with her bairns; and that's the way Sir Thomas wants our answer in a letter, for there's none of the family to be here this year."

It did not strike the mistress as strange that Colin made no answer. He was standing at the door looking out, and she could not see his face. And when he went out of doors presently, she was not surprised—it was natural he should want to see everything about the familiar place; and she called after him to say that, if he would wait a moment, she would go herself and show him Gowan's calf. But he either did not hear her, or, at least, did not wait the necessary moment; and when she had glanced out in her turn, and had perceived with delight that the wind had changed, and that the sun was going down in glorious crimson and gold behind the hills, the mistress returned with a

relieved heart to prepare the family tea. "It'll be a fine day to-morrow," she said to herself, rejoicing over it for Colin's sake; and so went in to her domestic duties with a lightened heart.

At that moment Colin had just pushed forth into the loch, flinging himself into the boat anyhow, disgusted with the world and himself and everything that surrounded him. In a moment, in the drawing of a breath, an utter blank and darkness had replaced all the lovely summer landscape that was glowing by anticipation in his heart. In the sudden pang of disappointment, the lad's first impulse was to fling himself forth into the solitude, and escape the voices and looks which were hateful to him at that moment. Nor was it simple disappointment that moved him; his feelings were complicated by many additional shades of aggravation. It had seemed so natural that everything should happen this year as last year, and now it seemed such blind folly to imagine that it could have been possible. Not only were his dreams all frustrated and turned to nothing, but he fell ever so many degrees in his own esteem, and felt so foolish and vain and blind, as he turned upon himself with the acute mortification and sudden disgust of youth. What an idiot he had been! To think she would again leave all the brilliant world for the loch and the primroses, and those other childish delights on which he had been dwelling like a fool! Very bitter were Colin's thoughts, as he dashed out into the middle of the loch, and there laid up his oars and abandoned himself to the buffetings of excited fancy. What right had he to imagine that she had ever thought of him again, or to hope that such a thread of gold could be woven into his rustic and homely web of fate? He scoffed at himself, as he remembered, with acute pangs of self-contempt, the joyous rose-coloured dreams that had occupied him only a few hours ago. What a fool he was to entertain such vain, complacent fancies! He, a

farmer's son, whose highest hope must be, after countless aggravations and exasperations, to get "placed" in a country church in some rural corner of Scotland. And then Colin recalled Sir Thomas Frankland's proposal, and took to his oars again in a kind of fury, feeling it impossible to keep still. The baronet's kind offer looked like an intentional insult to the excited lad. He thought to himself that they wanted to reward him somehow by rude, tangible means, as if he were a servant, for what Colin proudly and indignantly declared to himself was no service—certainly no intentional service. On the whole, he had never been so wretched, so downcast, so fierce and angry and miserable, in all his life. If he could but, by any means, by any toil, or self-denial, or sacrifice, get to Oxford, on his own account, and show the rich man and his son how little the Campbells of Ramore stood in need of patronage! All the glory had faded off the hills before Colin bethought himself of the necessity of returning to the homely house which he had greeted with so much natural pleasure a few hours before. His mother was standing at the door looking out for him as he drew towards the beach, looking at him with eyes full of startled and anxious half-comprehension. She knew he was disturbed somehow, and made guesses, right in the main, but all wrong in the particulars, which were, though he tried hard to repress all signs of it, another exasperation to Colin. This was how the first evening of his return closed upon the student of Ramore. He could not take any pleasure just then in the fact of being at home, nor in the homely love and respect and admiration that surrounded him. Like all the rest of the world, he neglected the true gold lying close at hand for the longing he had after the false diamonds that glittered at a distance. It was hard work for him to preserve an ordinary appearance of affection and interest in all that was going on, as he sat, absent and preoccupied, at his father's table. "Colin's no like you idle laddies; he has ower much to think of

to laugh and make a noise, like you," the mistress said with dignity, as she consoled the younger brothers, who were disappointed in Colin. And she half believed what she said, though she spoke with the base intention of deluding "the laddies," who knew no better. The house, on the whole, was rather disturbed than brightened by the return of the firstborn, who had thus brought a foreign element into the household life. Such was the inauspicious beginning of the holidays, which had been to Colin, for months back, the subject of so many dreams.

CHAPTER IX.

It was some time before Colin recovered his composure, or found it possible to console himself for the failure of his hopes. He wrote a great deal of poetry in the meantime—or rather of verses which looked wonderfully like poetry, such as young men of genius are apt to produce under such circumstances. The chances are, that if he had confided them to any critic of a sympathetic mind, attempts would have been made to persuade Colin that he was a poet. But luckily Lauderdale was not at hand, and there was no one else to whom the shy young dreamer would have disclosed himself. He sent some of his musings to the magazines, and so added a little excitement and anxiety to his life. But nobody knew Colin in that little world where, as in other worlds, most things go by favour, and impartial appreciation is comparatively unknown. The editors most probably would have treated their unknown correspondent in exactly the same manner had he been a young Tennyson. As it was, Colin did not quite know what to think about his repeated failures in this respect. When he was despondent he became disgusted with his own productions, and said to himself that of course such maudlin verse could be procured by the bushel, and was not worthy of paper and print. But in other moods the lad imagined he must have some enemy who prejudiced the editorial world, and shut against him the gates of literary fame. In books all the heroes, who could do nothing else, found so ready a subsistence by means of magazines, that the poor boy was naturally puzzled to find that all his efforts could not gain him a hearing.

And it began to be rather important to him to find something to do. During the previous summers Colin had not disdained the farm and its labours, but had worked with his father and brothers without any sense of incongruity. But now matters were changed. Miss Matty, with her curls and her smiles, had bewitched the boy out of his simple innocent life. It did not seem natural that the hand which she consented to touch with her delicate fingers should hold the plough or the reaping hook, or that her companion in so many celestial rambles should plod through the furrows at other times, or go into the rough drolleries of the harvest field.

Colin began to think that the life of a farmer's son at Ramore was inconsistent with his future hopes, and there was nothing else for it but teaching, since so little was to be made of the magazines. When he had come to himself and began to see the surrounding circumstances with clearer eyes, Colin, who had no mind to be dependent, but meant to make his own way as was natural to a Scotch lad of his class, bethought himself of the most natural expedient. He had distinguished himself at college, and it was not difficult to find the occupation he wanted. Perhaps he was glad to escape from the primitive home, from the mother's penetrating looks, and all the homely ways of which the ambitious boy began to be a little impatient. He had come to the age of discontent. He had begun to look forward no longer to the vague splendours of boyish imagination, but to elevation in the social scale, and what he heard people call success in life. A year or two before it had not occurred to Colin to consider the circumstances of his own lot;—his ambition pointed only to ideal grandeur, unembarrassed by particulars —and it was very possible for the boy to be happy, thinking of some incoherent greatness to come, while engaged in the humblest work, and living in the homeliest fashion. But the time had arrived when the pure ideal had to take to itself some human

garments, and when the farmer's son became aware that a scholar and a gentleman required a greater degree of external refinement in his surroundings. His young heart was wounded by this new sense, and his visionary pride offended by the thought that these external matters could count for anything in the dignity of a man. But Colin had to yield like every other. He loved his family no less, but he was less at home among them. The inevitable disruption was commencing, and already, with the quick insight of her susceptible nature, the mistress of Ramore had discovered that the new current was setting in, that the individual stream of Colin's life was about to disengage itself, and that her proud hopes for her boy were to be sealed by his separation from her. The tender-hearted woman said nothing of it, except by an occasional pathetic reflection upon things in general, which went to Colin's heart, and which he understood perfectly; but perhaps, though no one would have confessed as much, it was a relief to all when the scholar-son, of whom everybody at Ramore was so proud, went off across the loch, rowed by two of his brothers, with his portmanteau and the first evening coat he had ever possessed, to Ardmartin, the fine house on the opposite bank, where he was to be tutor to Mr. Jordan's boys, and eat among strangers the bread of his own toil.

The mistress stood at the door shading her eyes with her hand, and looking after the boat as it shot across the bright water. Never at its height of beauty had the Holy Loch looked more fair. The sun was expanding and exulting over all the hills, searching into every hollow, throwing up unthought-of tints, heaps of moss, and masses of rock, that no one knew of till that moment; and with the sunshine went flying shadows that rose and fell like the lifting of an eyelid. The gleam of the sun before she put up her hand to shade her face fell upon the tear in the mistress's eye, and hung a rainbow upon the long lash, which was wet with that tender dew. She looked at her

boys gliding over the loch through this veil of fairy colours, all made out of a tear, and the heart in her tender bosom beat with a corresponding conjunction of pain and happiness. "He'll never more come back to bide at home like his father's son," she said to herself, softly, with a pang of natural mortification; "but, eh, I'm a thankless woman to complain, and him so weel and so good, and naething in faut but nature," added the mother, with all the compunction of true love; and so stood gazing till the boat had gone out of hearing, and had begun to enter that sweet shadow of the opposite bank, projected far into the loch, which plunged the whole landscape into a dazzling uncertainty, and made it a doubtful matter which was land and which was water. Colin himself, touched by the loveliness of the scene, had paused just then to look down the shining line to where this beatified paradise of water opened out into the heaven of Clyde. And to his mother's eyes gazing after him, the boat seemed to hang suspended among the sweet spring foliage of the Lady's Glen, which lay reflected, every leaf and twig, in the sweeter loch. When somebody called her indoors she went away with a sigh. Was it earth, or a vision of Paradise, or "some unsubstantial fairy place?" The sense of all this loveliness struck intense, with almost a feeling of pain, upon the gentle woman's poetic heart.

And it was in such a scene that Colin wrote the verses which borrowed from the sun and the rain prismatic colours like those of his mother's tears, and were as near poetry as they could possibly be to miss that glory. Luckily for him he had no favourite confidant at hand to persuade him that he was a poet; so the verse-making did him nothing but good, providing a safety-valve for that somewhat stormy period of his existence.

Mr. Jordan was very rich and very liberal, and, indeed, lavish of the money which had elevated him above all his early friends and associations. He had travelled, he bought pictures, he

prided himself upon his library, and he was very good to his young tutor, who, he told everybody, was "a lad of genius;" and though naturally, even with all this, Colin's existence was not one of unmingled bliss, the change was good for him. As soon as he had left Ramore he began to look back to it with longing, as was natural to his years. The sense that he had that home behind him, with everybody ready to stand by him whatever trouble he might fall into, and every heart open to hear and sympathize in all the particulars of his life, restored the young man all at once to content and satisfaction with the homely household that loved him. When he was there life looked gray and sombre in all its sober-coloured garments; but when he looked across the loch at the white house on the hillside, that little habitation had regained its ideal character. He had some things to endure, as was natural, that galled his high spirit, but, on the whole, he was happier than if he had still been at Ramore.

And so the summer passed on. He had sent his answer to Sir Thomas without any delay—an answer in which, on the whole, his father concurred—written in a strain of lofty politeness which would not have misbecome a young prince. "He was destined for the Church of Scotland," Colin wrote, "and such being the case, it was best that he should content himself with the training of a Scotch university. Less perfect, no doubt," the boy had said, with a kind of haughty humility; "but, perhaps, better adapted to the future occupations of a Scotch clergyman. And then he went on to offer thanks in a magnificent way, calculated to overwhelm utterly the good-natured baronet, who had never once imagined that the pride of the farmer's son would be wounded by his proposal. The answer had been sent, and no notice had been taken of it. It was months since then, and not a word of Sir Thomas Frankland or his family had been heard about the Holy Loch. They seemed to have disappeared altogether back again into their

native firmament, never more to dazzle the eyes of beholders in the west country. It was hard upon Colin thus to lose, at a stroke, not only the hope on which he had built so securely, but at the same time a great part of the general stimulation of his life. Not only the visionary budding love which had filled him with so many sweet thoughts, but even the secret rivalry and opposition which no one knew of, had given strength and animation to his life—and now both seemed to have departed together. He mused over it often with wonder, asking himself if Lauderdale was right; if it was true that most things come to nothing; and whether meetings and partings, which looked as if they must tell upon life for ever and ever, were, after all, of not half so much account as the steady routine of existence? The youth perplexed himself daily with such questions, and wrote to Lauderdale many a long mysterious epistle which puzzled his anxious friend, who could not make out what had set Colin's brains astray out of all the confident philosophies of his years. When the young man, in his hours of leisure, climbed up the woody ravine close by, to where the burn took long leaps over the rocks, flinging itself down in diamonds and showers of spray into the heart of the deep summer foliage in the Lady's Glen, and from that height looked down upon the castle on the other side, seated among its lawns and trees on the soft promontory which narrowed the entrance of the loch, Colin could not but feel the unexpected void which was suddenly made in his life. The Frankland family had been prominent objects on his horizon for a number of years, In disliking or liking, they had been always before him; and even at his most belligerent period, there was something not disagreeable to the lad's fancy, at least, in this link of connexion with a world so different from his own —a world in which, however commonplace might be the majority of the actors, such great persons as were to be had in the age might still be found. And now they had gone altogether away

out of Colin's reach or ken; and he was left in his natural position nowise affected by his connexion with them. It was a strange feeling, and notwithstanding the scorn with which he rejected the baronet's kindness and declined his patronage, much disappointment and mortification mingled with the sense of surprise in Colin's mind. "It is all as it ought to be," he said to himself many times as he pondered over it; but, perhaps, if it had been quite as he expected, he would not have needed to impress that sentiment on his mind by so many repetitions. These reflections still recurred to him all the summer through whenever he had any time to himself. But Colin's time was not much at his own disposal. Nature had given to this country lad a countenance which propitiated the world. Not that it was handsome in the abstract, or could bear examination feature by feature; but there were few people who could resist the mingled shyness and frankness of the eyes with which Colin looked out upon the miraculous universe, perceiving perpetual wonders. The surprise of existence was still in his face, indignant though he would have been had anybody told him so; and tired people of the world, who knew better than they practised, took comfort in talking to the youth, who, whatever he might choose to say, was still looking as might be seen, with fresh eyes at the dewy earth, and saw everything through the atmosphere of the morning. This unconscious charm of his told greatly upon women, and most of all upon women who were older than himself. The young ladies were not so sure of him, for his fancy was preoccupied; but he gained many friends among the matrons whom he encountered, and generally was a popular individual. And then hospitality reigns paramount on those sweet shores of the Holy Loch. Mr. Jordan filled his handsome house with a continual succession of guests from all quarters; and as neither the host nor hostess was in the least degree amusing, Colin's services were in constant requisition. Sometimes the company was good,

often indifferent; but, at all events, it occupied the youth, and kept him from too much inquisition into the early troubles of his own career.

His life went on in this fashion until September brought sportsmen in flocks to the heathery braes of the loch. Colin, whose engagement was but a temporary one, was beginning to look forward once again to his old life in Glasgow—to the close little room in Donaldson's Land, and the long walks and longer talks with Lauderdale, which were almost his only recreation. Perhaps the idea was not so agreeable to him as in former years. Somehow, he was going back with a duller idea of existence, with no radiance of variable light upon his horizon; and in the absence of that fairy illumination the natural circumstances became more palpable, and struck him with a sense of their poverty and meanness such as he had never felt before. He had to gulp down a little disgust as he thought of his attic, and even, in the involuntary fickleness of his youth, was not quite so sure of enjoying Lauderdale's philosophy as he had been for all those bygone years.

He was in this state of mind when he heard of a new party of visitors who were to arrive the day after at Ardmartin—a distinguished party of visitors, fine people, whom Mr. Jordan had met somewhere in the world, and who had deigned to forget his lack of rank, and even of interest, in his wealth, and his grouse, and the convenient situation of his house; for Colin's employer was not moderately rich—a condition which does a man no good in society—but had heaps upon heaps of money, or was supposed to have it, which comes to about the same, and was respected accordingly. Colin listened but languidly to the scraps of talk he heard about these fine people. There was a dowager countess among them, whose name abstracted the lady of the house from all other considerations. As for Colin, he was still too young to care for dowagers; he heard without

hearing of all the preparations that were to be made, and the exertions that were thought necessary in order to make Ardmartin agreeable to so illustrious a party, and paid very little attention to anything that was going on, hoping within himself to make his escape from the fuss of the reception, and have a little time to himself. On the afternoon on which they were expected he betook himself to the hills, as soon as his work with his pupils was over. It had been raining as usual, and everything shone and glistened in the sun, which blazed all over the braes with a brightness that did not neutralize the chill of the season. The air was so still that Colin heard the crack of the sportsmen's guns from different points around him, miles apart from each other, and could even, on the height where he stood, make out the throb of the little steamer which was progressing through the loch at his feet, reflected to the minutest touch, from its pennon of white steam at the funnel to the patches of colour among its passengers on the deck, in the clear water over which it glided. The young man pursued his walk till the shadows began to gather, and the big bell of Ardmartin pealed out its summons to dress into all the echoes as he reached the gate. The house looked crowded to the very door, where it had overflowed in a margin of servants, some of whom were still unloading the last carriage as Colin entered. He pursued his way to his own room languidly enough, for he was tired, and he was not much interested in anything he personally was likely to hear or see.

But as he went up the grand staircase, he passed a door which was ajar, and from which came the sound of an animated conversation. Colin started as if he had received a blow, as one of these voices fell on his ear. He came to a dead pause in the gallery upon which this room opened, and stood listening, unconscious of the surprised looks of somebody's maid, who passed him with her lady's dress in her arms, and looked very

curiously at the tutor. Colin stopped short and listened, suddenly roused up to a degree of interest which brought the colour to his cheek and the light to his eye. He thought all the ladies of the party must be there, so varied was the pleasant din and so many the voices; but he had been standing breathless, in the most eager pose of listening, for nearly half the time allowed for dressing, before he heard again the voice which had arrested him. Then, when he began to imagine that it must have been a dream, the sound struck his ear once more—a few brief syllables, a sweet, sudden laugh, and again silence. Was it *her* voice? or was it only a trick of fancy? While he stood lingering, wondering, straining his ear for a repetition of the sound, the door opened softly, and various white figures in dressing-gowns flitted off upstairs and downstairs, some of them uttering little exclamations of fright at sight of the alarming apparition of a man. It was pretty to see them dispersing, like so many white doves, from that momentary confabulation; but *she* was not among them. Colin went up to his room and dressed with lightning speed, chafing within himself at the humble place which he was expected to take at the table. When he went into the dining-room, as usual, all the rest of the party were taking their places. The only womankind distinctly within Colin's sight was a lady of fifty, large enough to make six Matildas. He could not see *her* though he strained his eyes up and down through the long alley of fruits and flowers. Though he was not twenty, and had walked about ten miles that afternoon over the wholesome heather, the poor young fellow could not eat any dinner. He had been placed beside a heavy old man to amuse him, whom his employer thought might be useful to the young student; but Colin had not half a dozen words to spend upon any one. Was *she* here? or was it mere imagination which brought down to him now and then, through the pauses of the conversation, a momentary tone that

was like hers? When the ladies left the room the young man rushed, though it was not his office, to open the door for them. Another moment and Colin was in paradise—the paradise of fools. How was it possible that he could have been deceived? The little start with which she recognised him, the movement of surprise which made her drop her handkerchief and brought the colour to her cheek, rapt the lad into a feeling more exquisite than any he had known all his life. She smiled; she gave him a rapid, sweet look of recognition, which was made complete by that start of surprise. She was here, under the same roof—she whom he had never hoped to see again. Colin fell headlong into the unintended snare. He sat pondering over her look and her startled gesture all the tedious time, while the other men drank their wine, without being at all aware what divine elixir was in *his* cup. Her look of sweet wonder kept shining ever brighter and brighter before his imagination. Was it wonder only, or some dawning of another sentiment? If she had spoken, the spell might have been less powerful. A crowd of fairy voices kept whispering all manner of delicious follies in Colin's ear, as he sat waiting for the moment when he could follow her. Imagination did everything for him in that moment of expectation and unlooked-for delight.

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Jordan had invited a large party of people to meet the Dowager Countess ; but the greatness of the leading light, which was to illustrate his house, had blinded him to the companion stars that were to twinkle in her company. The principal people about had consented graciously to be reviewed by her ladyship, who, once upon a time, had been a very great lady and fashionable potentate. A very little fashion counts for much on the shores of the Holy Loch, and the population was moved accordingly. But the young ladies, who accompanied the dowager, were less carefully provided for. When Miss Frankland, who was unquestionably the beauty of the party, cast a glance of careless but acute observation round her, after all the gentlemen had returned to the drawing-room, she saw nobody whom she cared to distinguish by her notice. Most of the men about had a flavour of commerciality in their talk, or their manner, or their whiskers. Most of them were rich, some of them were very well bred and well educated, though the saucy beauty could not perceive it ; but there was not an individual among them who moved her curiosity on her interest, except one who stood rather in the background, and whose eyes kept seeking her with wistful devotion.

Colin had improved during the last year. He was younger than Miss Frankland, a fact of which she was aware, and he was at the age upon which a year tells mightily. Looking at him in the background, through clouds of complacent people who felt themselves Colin's superiors, even an indifferent spectator might

have distinguished the tall youth, with those heaps of brown hair overshadowing the forehead which might have been apostrophized as "domed for thought" if anybody could have seen it; and in his eyes that gleam of things miraculous, that unconscious surprise and admiration which would have given a touch of poetry to the most commonplace countenance. But Miss Matty was not an indifferent spectator. She was fond of him in her way as women are fond of a man whom they never mean to love—fond of him as one is fond of the victim who consents to glorify one's triumph. As she looked at him, and saw how he had improved, and perceived the faithful allegiance with which he watched every movement she made, the heart of the beauty was touched. Worship is sweet, even when it is only a country boy who bestows it—and perhaps this country boy might turn out a genius or a poet. Not that Matilda cared much for genius or poetry, but she liked everything which bestows distinction, and was aware that in the lack of other titles, a little notability, even in society, might be obtained if one was wise, and knew how to manage it, even by such means. And besides all this, honestly and at the foundation, she was fond of Colin. When she had surveyed all the company, and had made up her mind that there was nobody there in the least degree interesting, she held up her fan with a pretty gesture, calling him to her. The lad made his way through the assembly at that call with a smile and glow of exultation which it is impossible to describe. His face was lighted up with a kind of celestial intoxication. "Who is that very handsome young man?" the Dowager Countess was moved to remark as he passed within her ladyship's range of vision, which was limited, for Lady Hallamshire was, like most other people, shortsighted. "Oh, he is not a handsome young man, he is only the tutor," said one of the ladies of the Holy Loch; but, notwithstanding, she too looked after Colin, with aroused curiosity. "I suppose Matty Frankland must have met him in

society," said the Dowager, who was the most comfortable of *chaperones*, and went on with her talk, turning her eyeglass towards her pretty charge. As for the young men, they stared at Colin with mingled consternation and wrath. What was he? a fellow who had not a penny, a mere Scotch student, to be distinguished by the prettiest girl in the room? for the aspiring people about the Holy Loch, as well as in the other parts of Scotland, had come to entertain that contempt for the national universities and national scholarship which is so curious a feature in the present transition state of the country. If Colin had been an Oxford man the west-country people would have thought it quite natural, but a Scotch student did not impress them with any particular respect.

"I am so glad to meet you again!" said Matty, with the warmest cordiality, "but so surprised to see you here. What are you doing here? why have you come away from that delicious Ramore, where I am sure I should live for ever and ever if it were mine? What have you been doing with yourself all this time? Come and tell me all about it; and I do so want to know how everything is looking at that dear castle and in our favourite glen. Don't you remember that darling glen behind the church, where we used to gather basketfuls of primroses—and all the lovely mosses? I am dying to hear about everything and everybody. Do come and sit down here, and tell me all."

"Where shall I begin?" said Colin, who, utterly forgetful of his position, and all the humilities incumbent on him in such an exalted company, had instantly taken possession of the seat she pointed out to him, and had placed himself according to her orders directly between her and the company, shutting her into a corner. Miss Matty could see very well all that was going on in the drawing-room, but Colin had his back to the company, and had forgotten everything in the world except her face.

"Oh, with yourself, of course," said Matty. "I want to know all about it; and, first of all, what are you doing among these sort of people?" the young lady continued, with a little nod of her head towards the assembled multitude, some of whom were quite within hearing.

"These sort of people have very little to say to me," said Colin, who suddenly felt himself elevated over their heads; "I am only the tutor;" and the two foolish young creatures looked at each other, and laughed, as if Colin of Ramore had been a prince in disguise, and his tutorship an excellent joke.

"Oh, you are only the tutor?" said Miss Matty—"that is charming. Then one will be able to make all sorts of use of you. Everybody is allowed to maltreat a tutor. You will have to row us on the loch, and walk with us to the glen, and carry our cloaks, and generally conduct yourself as becomes a slave and vassal. As for me, I shall order you about with the greatest freedom, and expect perfect obedience," said the beauty, looking with her eyes full of laughter into Colin's face.

"All that goes without saying," said Colin, who did not like to commit himself to the French. "I almost think I have already proved my perfect allegiance."

"Oh, you were only a boy last year," said Miss Matty, with some evanescent change of colour, which looked like a blush to Colin's delighted eyes. "Now you are a man and a tutor, and we shall behave to you accordingly. How lovely that glen was last spring, to be sure," continued the girl, with a little quite unconscious natural feeling; "do you remember the day when it rained, and we had to wait under the beeches, and when you imagined all sorts of things in the pattering of the shower? Do you ever write any poetry now? I want so much to see what you have been doing—since—" said the siren, who, half-touched by nature in her own person, was still perfectly conscious of her power.

"Since!" Colin repeated the word over to himself with a flush of happiness which, perhaps, no real good in existence could have equalled. Poor boy! if he could but have known what had happened "since" in Miss Matty's experience—but, fortunately, he had not the smallest idea what was involved in the season which the young lady had lately terminated, or in the brilliant winter campaign in the country, which had brought adorers in plenty, but nothing worthy of the beauty's acceptance, to Miss Matty's feet. Colin thought only of the beatific dreams, the faithful follies which had occupied his own juvenile imagination "since." As for the heroine herself, she looked slightly confused to hear him repeat the word. She had meant it to produce its effect, but then she was thinking solely of a male creature of her own species, and not of a primitive, innocent soul like that which looked at her in a glow of young delight out of Colin's eyes. She was used to be admired and complimented, and humoured to the top of her bent, but she did not understand being believed in, and the new sensation somewhat fluttered and embarrassed the young woman of the world. She watched his look, as he replied to her, and thereby added doubly, though she did not mean it, to the effect of what she had said.

"I never write poetry," said Colin, "I wish I could—I know how I should use the gift; but I have a few verses about somewhere, I suppose, like everybody else. Last spring I was almost persuaded I could do something better; but that feeling lasts only so long as one's inspiration lasts," said the youth, looking down, in his turn, lest his meaning might be discovered too quickly in his eye.

And then there ensued a pause—a pause which was more dangerous than the talk, and which Miss Matty made haste to break.

"Do you know you are very much changed?" she said. "You never did any of this society-talk last year. You have been

making friends with some ladies somewhere, and they have taught you conversation. But, as for me, I am your early friend, and I preferred you when you did not talk like other people," said Miss Matty, with a slight pout. "Tell me who has been forming your mind?"

Perhaps it was fortunate for Colin at this moment that Lady Hallamshire had become much bored by the group which had gathered round her sofa. The dowager was clever in her way, and had written a novel or two, and was accustomed to be amused by the people who had the honour of talking to her. Though she was no longer a leader of fashion, she kept up the manners and customs of that remarkable species of the human race, and when she was bored, permitted her sentiments to be plainly visible in her expressive countenance. Though it was the member for the county who was enlightening her at that moment in the statistics of the West Highlands, and though she had been in a state of great anxiety five minutes before about the emigration which was depopulating the moors, her ladyship broke in quite abruptly in the midst of the poor-rates with a totally irrelevant observation—

"It appears to me that Matty Frankland has got into another flirtation; I must go and look after her," said the Dowager; and she smiled graciously upon the explanatory member, and left him talking, to the utter consternation of their hostess. Lady Hallamshire thought it probable that the young man was amusing as well as handsome, or Matty Frankland, who was a girl of discretion, would not have received him into such marked favour. "Though I daresay there is nobody here worth her trouble," her chaperone thought as she looked round the room; but anyhow a change was desirable. "Matty, mignonne, I want to know what you are talking about," she said, suddenly coming to anchor opposite the two young people; and a considerable fuss ensued to find her ladyship a seat, during which time Colin

had a hundred minds to run away. The company took a new centre after this performance on the part of the great lady, and poor Colin, all at once, began to feel that he was doing exactly the reverse of what was expected of him. He got up with a painful blush as he met Mr. Jordan's astonished eye. The poor boy did not know that he had been much more remarked before: "flirting openly with that dreadful little coquette Miss Frankland, and turning his back upon his superiors," as some of the indignant bystanders said. Even Colin's matronly friends, who pitied him and formed his mind, disapproved of his behaviour. "She only means to make a fool of you, and you ought not to allow yourself to be taken in by it," said one of these patronesses in his ear, calling him aside. But Fate had determined otherwise.

"Don't go away," said Lady Hallamshire. "I like Matty to introduce all her friends to me; and you two look as if you had known each other a long time," said the dowager, graciously; for she was pleased, like most women, by Colin's looks. "One would know him again if one met him," she added, in an audible aside; "he doesn't look exactly like everybody else, as most young men do. Who is he, Matty?" And Miss Frankland's *chaperone* turned the light of her countenance full upon Colin, quite indifferent to the fact that he had heard one part of her speech quite as well as the other. When a fine lady consents to enter the outer world, it is to be expected that she should behave herself as civilized people do among savages, and the English among the other nations of the world.

"Oh, yes! we have known each other a long time," said Matty, partly with a generous, partly with a mischievous, instinct. "My uncle knows Mr. Campbell's father very well, and Harry and he and I made acquaintance when we were children. I am sure you must have heard how nearly Harry was drowned once when we were at Kilchurn Castle. It was Mr. Campbell who saved his life."

"Oh!" said Lady Hallamshire; "but I thought that was"—and then she stopped short. Looking at Colin again, her ladyship's experienced eye perceived that he was not arrayed with that perfection of apparel to which she was accustomed; but at the same moment her eye caught his glowing face, half pleased, half haughty with that pride of lowliness which is of all pride the most defiant. "I am very glad to make Mr. Campbell's acquaintance,"—she went on so graciously that everybody forgot the pause. "Harry Frankland is a very dear young friend of mine, and we are all very much indebted to his deliverer."

It was just what a distinguished matron would have said in the circumstances in one of Lady Hallamshire's novels; but, instead of remaining overcome with grateful confusion, as the hero ought to have done, Colin made an immediate reply.

"I cannot take the credit people give me," said the lad, with a little heat. "He happened to get into my boat when he was nearly exhausted—that is the whole business. There has been much more talk about it than was necessary. I cannot pretend even to be a friend of Mr. Frankland," said Colin, with the unnecessary explanatoriness of youth, "and I certainly did not save his life."

With which speech the young man disappeared out of sight amid the wondering assembly, which privately designated him a young puppy and a young prig, and by various other epithets, according to the individual mind of the speaker. As for Lady Hallamshire, she was considerably disgusted. "Your friend is original, I dare say; but I am not sure that he is quite civil," she said to Matty, who did not quite know whether to be vexed or pleased by Colin's abrupt withdrawal. Perhaps on the whole the young lady liked him better for having a mind of his own, notwithstanding his devotion, and for preferring to bestow his worship without the assistance of spectators. If he had been a man in the least eligible as a lover, Miss Frankland might have

been of a different opinion; but, as that was totally out of possibility, Matty liked, on the whole, that he should do what was ideally right, and keep up her conception of him. She gave her head a pretty toss of semi-defiance, and went across the room to Mrs. Jordan, to whom she was very amiable and caressing all the rest of the evening. But she still continued to watch with the corner of her eye the tall boyish figure which was now and then to be discerned in the distance, with those masses of brown hair heaped like clouds upon the forehead, which Colin's height made visible over the heads of many very superior people. She knew he was watching her and noted every movement she made, and she felt a little proud of the slave, who, though he was only the tutor and a poor farmer's son, had something in his eyes which nobody else within sight had any inkling of. Matty was rather clever in her way, which was as much different from Colin's as light from darkness. No man of a mental calibre like hers could have found him out; but she had a little insight, as a woman, which enabled her to perceive the greater height when she came within sight of it. And then poor Colin, all unconsciously, had given her such an advantage over him. He had laid his boy's heart at her feet, and, half in love, half in imagination, had made her the goddess of his youth. If she had thought it likely to do him any serious damage, perhaps Matty, who was a good girl enough, and was of some use to the rector and very popular among the poor in her own parish, might have done her duty by Colin, and crushed this pleasant folly in the bud. But then it did not occur to her that a "friendship" of which it was so very evident nothing could ever come, could harm anybody. It did not occur to her that an ambitious Scotch boy, who knew no more of the world than a baby, and who had been fed upon all the tales of riches achieved and glories won which are the common fare of many a homely household, might possibly entertain a different opinion. So Matty asked all kinds of

questions about him of Mrs. Jordan, and gave him now and then a little nod when she met his eye, and generally kept up a kind of special intercourse far more flattering to the youth than ordinary conversation. Poor Colin neither attempted nor wished to defend himself. He put his head under the yoke, and hugged his chains. He collected his verses, poor boy! when he went to his own room that night—verses which he knew very well were true to her, but in which it would be rather difficult to explain the fatal stroke—the grievous blow on which he had expatiated so vaguely that it might be taken to mean the death of his lady rather than the simple fact that she did not come to Kilchurn Castle when he expected her. How to make her understand that this was the object of his lamentations puzzled him a little; for Colin knew enough of romance to be aware that the true lover does not venture to address the princess until he has so far conquered fortune as to make his suit with honour to her and fitness in the eyes of the world.

It was thus that the young tutor sat in his bare little room out of the way, and, with eyes that glowed over his midnight candle, looked into the future, and calculated visionary dates at which, if all went with him as he hoped, he might lay his trophies at his lady's feet. It is true that Matty herself fully intended by that time to have daughters ready to enter upon the round of conquest from which she should have retired into matron dignity; but no such profanity ever occurred to Colin. Thus the two thought of each other as they went to their rest—the one with all the delusions of heroic youthful love, the other with no delusions at all, but a half gratitude, half affection—a woman's compassionate fondness for the man who had touched her heart a little by giving her his, but whom it was out of the question ever to think of loving. And so the coils of Fate began to throw themselves around the free-born feet of young Colin of Ramore.

CHAPTER XI.

Lady Hallamshire was a woman very accessible to a little judicious flattery, and very sensible of good living. She liked Mr. Jordan's liberal house, and she liked the court that was paid to her; and was not averse to lengthening out her visit, and converting three days into a fortnight, especially as her ladyship's youngest son, Horace Fitz-Gibbon, who was a lieutenant in the navy, was expected daily in the Clyde—at least his ship was, which comes to the same thing. Horace was a dashing young fellow enough, with nothing but his handsome face (he had his mother's nose, as everybody acknowledged, and, although now a dowager, she had been a great beauty in her day), and the honourable prefix to his name to help him on in the world. Lady Hallamshire had heard of an heiress or two about, and her maternal ambition was stimulated; and, at the same time, the grouse were bewitching, and the cookery most creditable. The only thing she was sorry for was Matty Frankland, her ladyship said, who never could stay more than a week anywhere, unless she was flirting with somebody, without being bored. Perhaps the necessary conditions had been obtained even at Ardmartin, for Matty bore up very well on the whole. She fulfilled the threat of making use of the tutor to the fullest extent; and Colin gave himself up to the enjoyment of his fool's paradise without a thought of flying from the dangerous felicity. They climbed the hills together, keeping far in advance of their companions, who overtook them only to find the mood change, and to leave behind in the descent the pair of loiterers, whose

pace no calls nor advices, nor even the frequent shower, could quicken; and they rowed together over the lovely loch, about which Matty, having much fluency of language, and the adroitness of a little woman of the world in appropriating other people's sentiments, showed even more enthusiasm than Colin. Perhaps she too enjoyed this wonderful holiday in the life which already she knew by heart, and found no novelty in. To be adored, to be invested with all the celestial attributes, to feel herself the one grand object in somebody's world, is pleasant to a woman. Matty almost felt as if she was in love, without the responsibility of the thing, or any need for troubling herself about what it was going to come to. It could come to nothing—except an expression of gratitude and kindness to the young man who had saved her cousin's life. When everything was so perfectly safe, there could be no harm in the enjoyment; and the conclusion Matty came to, as an experimental philosopher, was, that to fall in love really, and to accept its responsibilities, would be an exciting but highly troublesome amusement. She could not help thinking to herself how anxious she should be about Colin if such a thing were possible. How those mistakes which he could not help making, and which at present did not disturb her in the least, would make her glow and burn with shame, if he were really anything to her. And yet he was a great deal to her. She was as good as if she had been really possessed by that love on which she speculated, and almost as happy; and Colin was in her mind most of the hours of the day, when she was awake, and a few of those in which she slept. The difference was, that Matty contemplated quite calmly the inevitable fact of leaving Ardmartin on Monday, and did not think it in the least likely that she would break her heart over the parting; and that, even in imagination, she never for a moment connected her fate with that of her young adorer.

But as for the poor youth himself, he went deeper and deeper

into the enchanted land. He went without any resistance, giving himself up to the sweet fate. She had read the poems of course, and had inquired eagerly into that calamity which occupied so great a part in them, and had found out what it was, and had blushed (as Colin thought), but was not angry. What could a shy young lover, whose lips were sealed by honour, but who knew his eyes, his actions, his productions to be alike eloquent, desire more? Sometimes Lady Hallamshire consented to weigh down the boat, which dipped hugely at the stern under her, and made Colin's task a hard one. Sometimes the tutor, who counted for nobody, was allowed to conduct a cluster of girls, of whom he saw but one, over the peaceful water. Lessons did not count for much in those paradisaical days. Miss Frankland begged holidays for the boys; begged that they might go excursions with her, and make pic-nics on the hill-side, and accompany her to all sorts of places, till Mrs. Jordan was entirely captivated with Matty. She never saw a young lady so taken up with children, the excellent woman said; and prophesied that Miss Matty would make a wonderful mother of a family when her time came. As for the tutor, Mrs. Jordan too took him for a cipher, and explained to him how improving it was for the boys to be in good society, by way of apologizing to Colin. At length there occurred one blessed day in which Colin and his boys embarked with Miss Frankland alone, to row across to Ramore. "My uncle has so high an opinion of Mr. Campbell," Matty said very demurely; "I know he would never forgive me if I did not go to see him." As for Colin, his blessedness was tempered on that particular occasion by a less worthy feeling. He felt, if not ashamed of Ramore, at least, apologetic of it and its accessories, which apology took, as was natural to a Scotch lad of his years, an argumentative and defiant tone.

"It is a poor house enough," said Colin, as he pointed it out,

gleaming white upon the hill-side, to Miss Matty, who pretended to remember it perfectly, but who after all had not the least idea which was Ramore—"but I would not change with anybody I know. We are better off in the cottages than you in the palaces. Comfort is a poor sort of heathen deity to be worshipped as you worship him in England. As for us, we have a higher standard," said the lad, half in sport and more than half in earnest. The two young Jordans after a little gaping at the talk which went over their heads (for Miss Matty was wonderfully taken up with the children only when their mother was present), had betaken themselves to the occupation of sailing a little yacht from the bows of their boat, and were very well-behaved and disturbed nobody.

"Yes," said Matty, in an absent tone. "By the way, I wish very much you would tell me why you rejected my uncle's proposal about going to Oxford. I suppose you *have* a higher standard; but then they say you don't have such good scholars in Scotland. I am sure I beg your pardon if I am wrong."

"But I did not say you were wrong," said Colin, who, however, grew fiery red, and burned to prove his scholarship equal to that of any Eton lad or Christ-church man. "They say, on the other side, that a man may get through without disgrace, in Oxford or Cambridge, who doesn't know how to spell English," said the youth, with natural exasperation—and took a few long strokes which sent the boat flying across the summer ripples, and consumed his angry energy. He was quite ready to sneer at Scotch scholarship in his own person, when he and his fellows were together, and even to sigh over the completer order and profounder studies of the great Universities of England; but to acknowledge the inferiority of his country in any particular to the lady of his wishes, was beyond the virtue of a Scotchman and a lover.

"I did not speak of stupid people," said Miss Matty; "and

I am sure I did not mean to vex you. Of course I know you are so very clever in Scotland; everybody allows *that*. I love Scotland so much," said the politic little woman; "but then every country has its weak points and its strong points; and you have not told me yet why you rejected my uncle's proposal. He wished you very much to accept it; and so did I," said the siren, after a little pause, lifting upon Colin the half-subdued light of her blue eyes.

"Why did you wish it?" the lad asked, as was to be expected, bending forward to hear the answer to his question.

"Oh, look there! little Ben will be overboard in another minute," said Matty, and then she continued lower, "I can't tell you, I'm sure; because I thought you were going to turn out a great genius, I suppose."

"But you don't believe *that?*" said Colin; "you say so only to make the Holy Loch a little more like Paradise; and that is unnecessary to-day," the lad went on, glancing round him with eyes full of the light that never was on sea or land. Though he was not a poet, he had what was almost better, a poetic soul. The great world moved for him always amid everlasting melodies, the morning and the evening stars singing together even through the common day. Just now his cup was about running over. What if, to crown all, God, not content with giving him life and love, had indeed visibly to the sight of others, if not to his own, bestowed genius also, the other gift most prized of youth. Somehow, he could not contradict that divine peradventure. "If it were so," he said under his breath, "if it were so!" and the other little soul opposite, who had lost sight of Colin at that moment, and did not know through what bright mists he was wandering, strained her limited vision after him, and wondered and asked what he meant.

"If it were so," said Matty, "what then?" Most likely she expected a compliment—and Colin's compliments being made

only by inference, and with a shyness and an emotion unknown to habitual manufacturers of such articles, were far from being unpleasant offerings to Miss Matty, who was slightly *blasé* of the common coin.

But Colin only shook his head, and bent his strong young frame to the oars, and shook back the clouds of brown hair from his half-visible forehead. The boat flew like a swallow along the crisp bosom of the loch. Miss Matty did not quite know what to make of the silence, not being in love. She took off her glove and held her pretty hand in the water over the side of the boat, but the loch was cold, and she withdrew it presently. What was he thinking of, she wondered? Having lost sight of him thus, she was reluctant to begin the conversation anew, lest she might perhaps say something which would betray her non-comprehension, and bring her down from that pedestal which, after all, it was pleasant to occupy. Feminine instinct at last suggested to Matty what was the very best thing to do in the circumstances. She had a pretty voice, and perfect ease in the use of it, and knew exactly what she could do, as people of limited powers generally can. So she began to sing, murmuring to herself at first as she stooped over the water, and then rising into full voice. As for Colin, that last touch was almost too much for him; he had never heard her sing before, and he could not help marvelling as he looked at her why Providence should have lavished such endowments upon one, and left so many others unprovided—and fell to rowing softly, dropping his oars into the sunshine with as little sound as possible, to do full justice to the song. When Matty had come to the end she turned on him quite abruptly, and, almost before the last note had died from her lips, repeated her question. "Now tell me why did you refuse to go to Oxford?" said the little siren, looking full into Colin's face.

"Because I can't be dependent upon any man, and because I

had done nothing to entitle me to such a recompense," said Colin, who was taken by surprise; "you all make a mistake about that business," he said, with a slight sudden flush of colour, and immediately fell to his oars again with all his might.

"It is very odd," said Miss Matilda. "Why don't you like Harry? He is nothing particular, but he is a very good sort of boy, and it is so strange that you should have such a hatred to each other—I mean to say, *he* is not at all fond of *you*," she continued, with a laugh. "I believe he is jealous because we all talk of you so much; and it must be rather hard upon a boy after all to have his life *saved*, and to be expected to be grateful; for I don't believe a word you say," said Miss Matty. "I know the rights of it better than you do—you *did* save his life."

"I hope you will quite release him from the duty of being grateful," said Colin; "I don't suppose there is either love or hatred between us. We don't know each other to speak of, and I don't see any reason why we should be fond of each other;" and again Colin sent the boat forward with long, rapid strokes, getting rid of the superfluous energy which was roused within by hearing Frankland's name.

"It is very odd," said Matty again. "I wonder if you are fated to be rivals, and come in each other's way. If I knew any girl that Harry was in love with, I should not like to introduce you to her," said Miss Matty, and she stopped and laughed a little, evidently at something in her own mind. "How odd it would be if you were to be rivals through life," she continued; "I am sure I can't tell which I should most wish to win—my cousin, who is a very good boy in his way, or you, who puzzle me so often," said the little witch, looking suddenly up into Colin's eyes.

"How is it possible I can puzzle you?" he said; but the innocent youth was flattered by the sense of superiority involved. "There can be very little rivalry between an English baronet

and a Scotch minister," continued Colin. "We shall never come in each other's way."

"And *must* you be a Scotch minister?" said Miss Matty, softly. There was a regretful tone in her voice, and she gave an appealing glance at him, as if she were remonstrating against that necessity. Perhaps it was well for Colin that they were so near the shore, and that he had to give all his attention to the boat, to secure the best landing for those delicate little feet. As he leaped ashore himself, ankle-deep into the bright but cold water, Colin could not but remember his boyish scorn of Henry Frankland, and that dislike of wet feet which was so amusing and wonderful to the country boy. Matters were wonderfully changed now-a-days for Colin; but still he plunged into the water with a certain relish, and pulled the boat ashore with a sense of his strength and delight in it which at such a moment it was sweet to experience. As for Miss Matty, she found the hill very steep, and accepted the assistance of Colin's arm to get over the sharp pebbles of the beach. "One ought to wear strong boots," she said, holding out the prettiest little foot, which indeed had been perfectly revealed before by the festooned dress, which Miss Matty found so convenient on the hills. When Colin's mother saw from her window this pair approaching alone (for the Jordan boys were ever so far behind, still coquetting with their toy yacht), it was not wonderful if her heart beat more quickly than usual. She jumped, with her womanish imagination, at all kinds of incredible results, and saw her Colin happy and great, by some wonderful conjunction of his own genius and the favour of others, which it would have been hopeless to attempt any comprehension of. The mistress altogether puzzled and overwhelmed Miss Matty by the greeting she gave her. The little woman of the world looked in utter amazement at the poor farmer's wife, whom she meant to be very kind and amiable to, but who to her consternation, took

the superior part by right of nature; for Mrs. Campbell, being possessed by her own idea, was altogether obtuse to her visitor's condescensions. The parlour at Ramore looked dingy certainly after the drawing-rooms of Ardmartin, and all the business of the farm was manifestly going on as usual; but even Colin, sensitive as he had become to all the differences of circumstances, was puzzled, like Matty, and felt his mother to have suddenly developed into a kind of primitive princess. Perhaps the poor boy guessed why, and felt that his love was elevating not only himself but everybody who belonged to him; but Miss Matty, who did not understand how profound emotion could affect anybody's manners, nor how her young admirer's mother could be influenced by his sentiments, was entirely in the dark, and could not help being immensely impressed by the bearing and demeanour of the mistress of Ramore.

"I'm glad it's such a bonny day," said Colin's mother; "it looks natural and seemly to see you here on a day like this. As for Colin, he aye brings the light with him, but no often such sunshine as you. I canna lay any great feast before you," said the farmer's wife with a smile, "but young things like you are aye near enough heaven to be pleased with the common mercies. After a', if I was a queen I couldna offer you anything better than the white bread and the fresh milk," said the mistress; and she set down on the table, with her own tender hands, the scones for which Ramore was famous, and the abundant overrunning jug of milk, which was not to be surpassed anywhere, as she said. Matty sat down with an odd involuntary conviction that Mr. Jordan's magnificent table on the other side of the loch offered but a poor hospitality in comparison. Though she laughed at herself an hour after, it was quite impossible at that moment to feel otherwise than respectful. "I never saw anybody with such beautiful manners," she said to Colin as they went back to the boat. She did not take his arm this

time, but walked very demurely after him down the narrow path, feeling upon her the eyes of the mistress, who was standing at her door as usual to see her son go away. Matty could not help a little natural awe of the woman whose soft eyes were watching her. She could manage her aunt perfectly, and did not care in the least for Lady Hallamshire, who was the most accommodating of chaperones, but Mrs. Campbell's sweet looks, and generous reception of her son's enslaver somehow overwhelmed Matty. The mistress looked at the girl as if she considered her capable of all the grand and simple emotions which were in her own heart, and Matty was half-ashamed and half-frightened, and did not feel able at the moment to pursue her usual amusement. The row back, to which Colin had been looking with a thrill of expectation, was silent and grave, in comparison with all their former expeditions, notwithstanding that this was the last time they were likely to see each other alone. Poor Colin thought of Lauderdale and his philosophy, for the first time for many days, when he had to stop behind to place the boat in safety on the beach, while Matty, who generally waited for him, skipped up the avenue as fast as she could go, with the little Jordans beside her. Never yet was reality which came truly up to the expectation. Here was an end of his fool's paradise; he vexed himself by going over and over all that had passed, wondering if anything had offended her; and then thought of Ramore with a pang at his heart—a pang of something nobler than the mere bitterness of contrast, which sometimes makes a poor man ashamed of his home. But all this time the true reason for her new-born reserve—which Miss Matty kept up victoriously until about the close of the evening, when, being utterly bored, she forgot her good resolution and called him to her side again—was quite unsuspected by Colin. He could not divine how susceptible to the opinion of women was the heart of a woman, even when it

retained but little of its first freshness. Matty was not startled by Colin's love, but she was by his mother's belief in it and herself; it stopped her short in her careless career, and suggested endings that were not pleasant to think of. If she had been kept in amusement for a day or two after, it might have been well for Colin—but being bored she returned to her natural sport, and this interruption did him no good in the end.

CHAPTER XII.

THE parting of the two who had been thrown so much together, who had thought so much of each other, and who had, notwithstanding, so few things in common, was as near an absolute parting as is practicable in this world of constant commotion, where everybody meets everybody else in the most unlikely regions. Colin dared not propose to write to her; dared not, indeed—being withheld by the highest impulses of honour—venture to say to her what was in his heart; and Miss Matty herself was a little silent—perhaps a little moved—and could not utter any commonplaces about meeting again, as she had intended to do. So they said good-bye to each other in a kind of absolute way, as if it might be for ever and ever. As for Matty, who was not in love, but whose heart was touched, and who had a vague, instinctive sense that she might never more meet anybody in her life like this country lad—perhaps she had enough generosity left in her to feel that it would be best they should not meet again. But Colin had no such thoughts. He felt in his heart that one time—how or when he knew not—he should yet go to her feet and offer what he had to offer: everything else in the world except that one thing was doubtful to Colin, but concerning that he was confident, and entertained no fear. And so they parted; she, perhaps, for half an hour or so, the most deeply moved of the two. Miss Matty, however, was just as captivating as usual in the next house they went to, where there were one or two people worth looking at, and the company in general was more interesting than at Ardmartin;

but Colin, for his part, spent most of the evening on the hill-side, revolving in the silence a hundred tumultuous thoughts. It was the end of September, and the nights were cold on the Holy Loch. There was not even a moon to enliven the landscape, and all that could be seen was the cold, blue glimmer of the water, upon which Colin looked down with a kind of desolate sense of elevation—elevation of the mind and of the heart, which made the grief of parting look like a grand moral agent, quickening all his powers, and concentrating his strength. Henceforward the strongest of personal motives was to inspire him in all his conflicts. He was going into the battle of life with his lady's colours on his helmet, like a knight of romance, and failure was not to be thought of as a possibility. As he set his face to the wind, going back to Ardmartin, the pale sky lightened over the other side of the loch, and underneath the breaking clouds, which lay so black on the hills, Colin saw the distant glimmer of a light, which looked like the light in the parlour window at Ramore. Just then a sudden gust swept across the hill-side, throwing over him a shower of falling leaves, and big rain-drops from the last shower. There was not a soul on the road but Colin himself, nor anything to be seen far or near, except the dark tree-tops in the Lady's Glen, which were sighing in the night wind, and the dark side of Ardmartin, where all the shutters were closed, and one soft star hanging among the clouds just over the spot where that little friendly light in the farmhouse of Ramore held up its glimmer of human consolation into the darkness. It was not Hero's torch to light her love—was it, perhaps, a sober gleam of truth and wisdom to call the young Leander back from those bitter waters in which he could but perish? All kinds of fancies were in Colin's mind as he went back, facing the wind, to the dull, closed up house, from which the enchantment had departed; but among them there occurred no thought of discouragement from this pursuit

upon which now his heart was set. He would have drowned himself could he have imagined it possible that he could cease to love—and so long as he loved how was it possible to fail?

"And *must* you be a Scotch minister?" When Colin went home a fortnight later to make his preparations for returning to the University, he was occupied, to the exclusion of almost all other questions, by revolving this. It is true that at his age, and with his inexperience, it was possible to imagine that even a Scotch minister, totally unfavoured by fortune, might, by mere dint of genius, raise himself to heights of fame sufficient to bring Sir Thomas Franklin's niece within his reach—but the thing was unlikely, even to the lively imagination of twenty. And it was the fact that Colin had no special "vocation" towards the profession for which he was being trained. He had been educated and destined for it all his life, and his thoughts had a natural bias that way. But otherwise there was no personal impulse in his mind towards what Mrs. Jordan called "the work of the ministry." Hitherto his personal impulses had been neither for nor against. Luckily for Colin, and many of his contemporaries, there were so many things to object to in the Church of Scotland, so many defects of order and external matters which required reformation, that they were less strongly tempted to become sceptical in matters of faith than their fellows elsewhere. As for Colin himself, he had fallen off no doubt from the certainty of his boyhood upon many important matters; but the lad, though he was a Scotchman, was happily illogical, and suffered very little by his doubts. Nothing could have made him sceptical, in any real sense of the word, and accordingly there was no repulsion in Colin's mind against his future profession. But now! He turned it over in his mind night and day in the interval between Matty's departure and his own return to Ramore. What if, instead of a Scotch minister, incapable of promotion, and to whom ambition itself was unlawful, he were to address

himself to the Bar, where there were at least chances and possibilities of fame? He was occupied with this question, to the exclusion of every other, as he crossed the loch in the little steamer, and landed on the pier near Ramore, where his young brothers met him, eager to carry his travelling-bag, and convey him home in triumph. Colin was aware that such a proposal on his part would occasion grievous disappointment at home, and he did not know how to introduce the subject, or disclose his wavering wishes. It was a wonderful relief, as well as confusion to him, when he entered the Ramore parlour, to find Lauderdale in possession of the second arm-chair, opposite the mistress's, which was sacred to visitors. He had arrived only the evening before, having left Glasgow "for a holiday, like everybody else, in the saut-water season; the first I ever mind of having in my life," he said, with a certain boyish satisfaction, stretching out his long limbs by the parlour fire.

"It's ower cauld to have much good of the water," said the mistress; "the boat's no laid up yet, waiting for Colin, but the weather's awfu' winterly—no to say soft," she added, with a little sigh, "for its aye soft weather among the lochs, though we've had less rain than common this year."

And as the mistress spoke, the familiar, well-known rain came sweeping down over the hills. It had the usual effect upon the mind of the sensitive woman. "We maun take a' the good we can of you, laddie," she said, laying her kind hand on her boy's shoulder, "it's only a sight we get now in passing. He's owre much thought of, and made of, to spend his time at hame," the mistress added, turning, with a half-reproachful pride to Lauderdale; "I'll be awfu' sorry if the rain lasts, on your account. But, for myself, I could put up with a little soft weather, to see mair of Colin; no that I want him to stay at hame when he might be enjoying himself," she continued with a compunction. Soft weather on the Holy Loch signified

rain and mist, and everything that was most discouraging to Mrs. Campbell's soul, but she was ready to undergo anything the skies could inflict upon her, if fortified by the society of her son.

It was the second night after his return before Colin could make up his mind to introduce the subject of which his thoughts were full. Tea was over by that time, and all the household assembled in the parlour. The farmer himself had just laid down his newspaper, from which he had been reading scraps of county gossip aloud, somewhat to the indignation of the mistress, who, for her part, liked to hear what was going on in the world, and took a great interest in Parliament and the foreign intelligence. "I canna say that I'm heeding about the muckle apple that's been grown in Clydesdale, nor the new bailies in Greenock," said the farmer's wife. "If you would read us something wise-like about thae poor oppressed Italians, or what Louiss Napoleon is thinking about—I canna excuse him for what they ca' the *coo-detaw*," said Mrs. Campbell; "but for a' that, I take a great interest in him;" and with this the mistress took up her knitting with a pleasant anticipation of more important news to come.

"There's naething in the *Herald* about Louiss Napoleon," said the farmer, "nor the Italians neither—no that I put much faith in thae Italians; they'll quarrel amang themselves when there's naebody else to quarrel wi'—though I'm no saying onything against Cavour and Garibaldi. The paper's filled full o' something mair immediately interesting—at least, it ought to have mair interest to you wi' a son that's to be a minister. Here's three columns mair about that Dreepdaily case. It may be a grand thing for popular rights, but it's an awfu' ordeal for a man to gang through," said big Colin, looking ruefully at his son.

"I was looking at that," said Lauderdale. "It's his prayers

the folk seem to object to most—and no wonder. I've heard the man mysel', and his sermon was not bad reasoning, if anybody wanted reasoning; but it's a wonderful thing to me the way that new preachers take upon them to explain matters to the Almighty," said Colin's friend reflectively. "So far as I can see, we've little to ask in our worship; but we have an awfu' quantity of things to explain."

"It is an ordeal I could never submit to," said Colin, with perhaps a little more heat than was necessary. "I'd rather starve than be set up as a target for a parish. It is quite enough to make a cultivated clergy impossible for Scotland. Who would submit to expose one's life, all one's antecedents, all one's qualities of mind and language to the stupid criticism of a set of boors? It is a thing I never could submit to," said the lad, meaning to introduce his doubts upon the general subject by this violent means.

"I dinna approve of such large talking," said the farmer, laying down his newspaper. "It's a great protection to popular rights. I would sooner run the risk of disgusting a fastidious lad now and then, than put in a minister that gives nae satisfaction; and if you canna submit to it, Colin, you'll never get a kirk, which would be worse than criticism," said his father, looking full into his face. The look brought a conscious colour to Colin's cheeks.

"Well," said the young man, feeling himself driven into a corner, and taking what courage he could from the emergency, "one might choose another profession;" and then there was a pause, and everybody in the room looked with alarm and amazement on the bold speaker. "After all, the Church is not the only thing in Scotland," said Colin, feeling the greatness of his temerity. "Nobody ventures to say it is in a satisfactory state. How often do I hear you criticising the sermon and finding fault with the prayers? and, as for Lauderdale, he finds fault

with everything. Then, look how much a man has to bear before he gets a church as you say. As soon as he has his presentation the Presbytery comes together and asks if there are any objections; and then the parish sits upon the unhappy man; and, when everybody has had a turn at him, and all his peculiarities and personal defects and family history have been discussed before the Presbytery—and put in the newspapers, if they happen to be amusing—then the poor wretch has to sign a confession which nobody—"

"Stop you there, Colin, my man," said the farmer, "that's enough at one time. I wouldna say that you were a'thegither wrong as touching the sermon and the prayers. It's awfu' to go in from the like of this hill-side and weary the very heart out of you in a close kirk, listening to a man preaching that has nothing in this world to say. I am whiles inclined to think—" said big Colin, thoughtfully—"laddies, you may as well go to your beds. You'll see Colin the morn, and ye canna understand what we're talking about. I am whiles disposed to think," he continued after a pause, during which the younger members of the family had left the room, after a little gentle persuasion on the part of the mistress, "when I go into the kirk on a bonnie day, such as we have by times on the lock baith in summer and winter, that it's an awfu' waste of time. You lose a' the bonnie prospect, and you get naething but weariness for your pains. I've aye been awfu' against set prayers read out of a book; but I canna but allow the English chapel has a kind of advantage in that, for nae fool can spoil your devotion there, as I've heard it done many and many's the time. I ken our minister's prayers very near as well as if they were written down," said the farmer of Ramore, "and the maist part of them is great nonsense. Ony little scraps o' real supplication there may be in them, you could get through in five minutes; the rest is a' remarks, that I never can discriminate if they're meant for me or for the

Almighty; but my next neibor would think me an awfu' heathen if he heard what I'm saying," he continued, with a smile; "and I'm far from sure that I would get a mair merciful judgment from the wife herself."

The mistress had been very busy with her knitting while her husband was speaking; but, notwithstanding her devotion to her work, she was uneasy and could not help showing it. "If we had been our lane it would have been naething," she said to Colin, privately; "but afore yon man that's a stranger and doesna ken!" With which sentiment she sat listening, much disturbed in her mind. "It's no a thing to say before the bairns," she said, when she was thus appealed to, "nor before folk that dinna ken you. A stranger might think you were a careless man to hear you speak," said Mrs. Campbell, turning to Lauderdale with bitter vexation, "for a' that you havena missed the kirk half a dozen times a' the years I have kent you —and that's a long time," said the mother, lifting hers oft eyes to her boy. When she looked at him she remembered that he too had been rash in his talk. "You're turning awfu' like your father, Colin," said the mistress, "taking up the same thoughtless way of talking. But I think different for a' you say. Our ain kirk is aye our ain kirk to you as well as to me, in spite o' your speaking. I'm well accustomed to their ways," she said, with a smile, to Lauderdale, who, so far from being the dangerous observer she thought him, had gone off at a tangent into his own thoughts.

"The Confession of Faith is a real respectable historical document," said Lauderdale. "I might not like to commit myself to a' it says, if you were to ask me; but then I'm not the kind o' man that has a heart to commit myself to anything in the way of intellectual truth. I wouldna bind myself to say that I would stand by any document a year after it was put forth, far less a hundred years. There's things in it naebody

believes—for example, about the earth being made in six days; but I would not advise a man to quarrel with his kirk and his profession for the like of that. I put no dependence on geology for my part, nor any of the sciences. How can I tell but somebody might make a discovery the morn that would upset all their fine stories? But, on the whole, I've very little to say against the Confession. It's far more guarded about predestination and so forth than might have been expected. Every man of common sense believes in predestination; though I would not be the man to commit myself to any statement on the subject. The like of me is good for little," said Colin's friend, stretching his long limbs towards the fire, "but I've great ambition for that callant. He's not a common callant, though I'm speaking before his face," said Lauderdale; "it would be terrible mortifying to me to see him put himself in a corner and refuse the yoke."

"If I cannot bear the yoke conscientiously, I cannot bear it at all," said Colin, with a little heat. "If *you* can't put your name to what you don't believe, why should I?—and as for ambition," said the lad, "ambition! what does it mean?—a country church, and two or three hundred ploughmen to criticise me, and the old wives to keep in good humour, and the young ones to drink tea with—is that work for a man?" cried the youth, whose mind was agitated, and who naturally had said a good deal more than he intended to say. He looked round in a little alarm after this rash utterance, not knowing whether he had been right or wrong in such a disclosure of his sentiments. The father and mother looked at each other, and then turned their eyes simultaneously upon their son. Perhaps the mistress had a glimmering of the correct meaning which Colin would not have betrayed wittingly had it cost him his life.

"Eh, Colin, sometime ye'll think better," she cried under her breath—"after a' our pride in you and our hopes!" The tears

came into her eyes as she looked at him. "It's mair honour to serve God than to get on in this world," said the mistress. The disappointment went to her heart, as Colin could see; she put her hands hastily to her eyes to clear away the moisture which dimmed them. "It's maybe naething but a passing fancy—but it's no what I expected to hear from any bairn of mine," she said with momentary bitterness. As for the farmer, he looked on with a surprised and inquiring countenance.

"There has some change come over you, Colin—what has happened?" said his father. "I'm no a man that despises money, nor thinks it a sin to get on in the world, but it's only fools that quarrel wi' what's within their reach for envy of what they can never win to. If ye had displayed a strong bent any other way I wouldna have minded," said big Colin. "But it's the new-fangled dishes at Ardmartin that have spoiled the callant's digestion; he'll come back to his natural inclination when he's been at home for a day or two," the farmer added, laying his large hand on his son's shoulder with a pressure which meant more than his words; but the youth was vexed, and impatient, and imagined himself laughed at, which is the most dreadful of insults at Colin's age, and in his circumstances. He paid no attention to his father's looks, but plunged straightway into vehement declaration of his sentiments, to which the elder people around him listened with many complications of feeling unknown to Colin. The lad thought, as was natural at his years, that nobody had ever felt before him the same bondage of circumstance and perplexities of soul, and that it was a new revelation he was making to his little audience. If he could have imagined that both the men were looking at him with the half sympathy, half pity, half envy of their maturer years, remembering as vividly as if it had occurred but yesterday similar outbreaks of impatience and ambition and natural resist-

ance to all the obstacles of life, Colin would have felt deeply humiliated in his youthful fervour; or, if he could but have penetrated the film of softening dew in his mother's eyes, and beheld there the woman's perennial spectatorship of that conflict which goes on for ever. Instead of that, he thought he was making a new revelation to his hearers; he thought he was cruel to them, tearing asunder their pleasant mists of illusion, and disenchanting their eyes; he had not an idea that they knew all about it better than he did, and were watching him as he rushed along the familiar path which they all had trod in different ways, and of which they knew the inevitable ending. Colin, in the heat and impatience of his youth, took full advantage of his moment of utterance. He poured forth in his turn that flood of immeasurable discontent with all conditions and restrictions, which is the privilege of his years. To be sure, the restrictions and conditions surrounding himself were, so far as he knew, the sole objects of that indignation and scorn and defiance which came to his lips by force of nature. As for his mother, she listened, for her part, with that mortification which is always the woman's share. She understood him, sympathised with him, and yet did not understand nor could tolerate his dissent from all that in her better judgment she had decided upon on his behalf. She was far more tender, but she was less tolerant than the other spectators of Colin's outburst; and mingled with all her personal feeling was a sense of wounded pride and mortification, that her boy had thus betrayed himself "before a stranger." "If we had been our lane, it would have been less matter," she said to herself, as she wiped the furtive tears hurriedly from the corners of her eyes.

When Colin had come to an end there was a pause. The boy himself thought it was a pause of horror and consternation, and perhaps was rather pleased to produce an effect in some degree corresponding to his own excitement. After that moment of

silence, however, the farmer got up from his chair. "It's very near time we were a' gaun to our beds," said big Colin. "I'll take a look round to see that the beasts are comfortable, and then we'll have in the hot water. You and me can have a talk the morn," said the farmer to his son. This was all the reply which the youth received from the parental authorities. When the master went out to look after the beasts, Lauderdale followed to the door, where Colin in another moment strayed after him, considerably mortified, to tell the truth; for even his mother addressed herself to the question of "hot water," which implied various other accessories of the homely supper-table; and the young man, in his excitement and elevation of feeling, felt as if he had suddenly tumbled down out of the stormy but lofty firmament, into which he was soaring—down, with a shock, into the embraces of the homely tenacious earth. He went after his friend, and stood by Lauderdale's side, looking out into a darkness so profound that it made his eyes ache and confused his very mind. The only gleam of light visible in earth or heaven was big Colin's lantern, which showed a tiny gleam from the door of the byre where the farmer was standing. All the lovely landscape round, the loch and the hills, the sky and the clouds, lay unseen—hidden in the night. "Which is an awfu' grand moral lesson, if we had but sense to discern it," said the voice of Lauderdale ascending half-way up to the clouds; "for the loch hasna' vanished, as might be supposed, but only the light. As for you, callant, you ken neither the light nor the darkness as yet, but are aye seeing miraculous effects like yon man Turner's pictures, Northern Streamers, or Aurora Borealis, or whatever ye may call it. And it's but just you should have your day;" with which words Lauderdale heaved a great sigh, which moved the clouds of hair upon Colin's forehead, and even seemed to disturb, for a moment, the profound gloom of the night.

"What do you mean by having my day?" said Colin, who was affronted by the suggestion. "You know I have said nothing that is not true. Can I help it if I see the difficulties of my own position more clearly than you do, who are not in my circumstances?" cried the lad with a little indignation. Lauderdale, who was watching the lantern gliding out and in through the darkness, was some time before he made any reply.

"I'm no surprised at yon callant Leander, when one comes to think of it," he said in his reflective way; "it's a fine symbol, that Hero in her tower. May be she took the lamp from the domestic altar and left the household god in darkness," said the calm philosopher; "but that makes no difference to the story. I wouldna' say but I would swim the Hellespont myself for such an inducement—or the Holy Loch—it's little matter which; but whiles she lets fall the torch before you get to the end—"

"What do you mean? or what has Hero to do with me?" cried Colin, with a secret flush of shame and rage, which the darkness concealed but which he could scarcely restrain.

"I was not speaking of you—and after all, it's but a fable," said Lauderdale; "most history is fable, you know; it's no actual events, (which I never believe in, for my part,) but the instincts o' the human mind that make history—and that's how the Heros and Leanders are aye to be accounted for. He was drowned in the end like most people," said Lauderdale, turning back to the parlour where the mistress was seated, pondering with a troubled countenance upon this new aspect of her boy's life. Amid the darkness of the world outside this tender woman sat in the sober radiance of her domestic hearth, surrounded and enshrined by light; but she was not like Hero on the tower. Colin, too, came back, following his friend with a flush of excitement upon his youthful countenance. After all, the idea was not displeasing to the young man. The Hellespont, or the Holy Loch, were nothing to the bitter waters which he was prepared

to breast by the light of the imaginary torch held up in the hand of that imaginary woman who was beckoning Colin, as he thought, into the unknown world. Life was beginning anew in his person, and all the fables had to be enacted over again; and what did it matter to the boy's heroic fancy, if he too should go to swell the record of the ancient martyrs, and be drowned, as Lauderdale said—like most people—in the end?

There was no further conversation upon this important subject until next morning, when the household of Ramore got up early, and sat down to breakfast before it was perfect daylight; but Colin's heart jumped to his mouth, and a visible thrill went through the whole family, when the farmer came in from his early inspection of all the byres and stables, with another letter from Sir Thomas Frankland conspicuous in his hand.

CHAPTER XIII.

"THE question is, will ye go or will ye stay?" said big Colin of Ramore; "but for this, you and me might have had a mair serious question to discuss. I see a providence in it for my part. You're but a callant; it will do you nae harm to wait; and you'll be in the way of seeing the world at—what do they call the place? If your mother has nae objections, and ye see your ain way to accepting, I'll be very well content. It's awfu' kind o' Sir Thomas after the way ye've rejected a' his advances—but, no doubt he's heard that you got on gey weel, on the whole, at your ain college," said the farmer, with a little complacency. They were sitting late over the breakfast table, the younger boys looking on with eager eyes, wondering over Colin's wonderful chances, and feeling severely the contrast of their own lot, who had to take up the ready satchel and the "piece," which was to occupy their healthful appetites till the evening, and hurry off three miles down the loch to school. As for Archie, he had been long gone to his hard labour on the farm, and the mother and father and the visitor were now sitting, a little committee upon Colin's prospects, which the lad himself contemplated with a mixture of delight and defiance wonderful to see.

"It's time for the school, bairns," said the farmer's wife; "be good laddies, and dinna linger on the road either coming or going. Ye'll get apples a-piece in the press. I couldna give ony advice, if you ask me," said the Mistress, looking at her son with her tender eyes: "Colin, my man, it's no for me nor your father either to say one thing or another—it's you that

must decide—it's your ain well-being and comfort and happiness——." Here the Mistress stopped short with an emotion which nobody could explain; and at which even Colin, who had the only clue to it, looked up out of his own thoughts, with a momentary surprise.

"Hoot," said the farmer; "you're aye thinking of happiness, you women. I hope the laddie's happiness doesna lie in the power of a year's change one way or another. I canna see that it will do him any harm—especially after what he was saying last night—to pause awhile and take a little thought; and here's the best opportunity he could well have. But he doesna say anything himself—and if you're against it, Colin, speak out. It's your concern, most of all, as your mother says."

"The callant's in a terrible swither," said Lauderdale, with a smile; "he'll have it, and he'll no have it. For one thing, it's an awfu' disappointment to get your ain way just after you've made up your mind that you're an injured man; and he's but a callant after all, and kens no better. For my part, I'm no fond of changing when you've once laid your plans. No man can tell what terrible difference a turn in the road may make. It's aye best to go straight on. But there's exceptions," continued Lauderdale, laying his hand on Colin's shoulder. "So far as I can see, there's no reason in this world why the callant should not stand still a moment and taste the sweetness of his lot. He's come to man's estate, and the heavens have never gloomed on him yet. There's no evil in him, that I can see," said Colin's friend, with an unusual trembling in his voice; "but for human weakness, it might have been the lad Michael or Gabriel, out of heaven, that's been my companion these gladsome years. It may be but more sweetness and blessing that's in store for him. I know no reason why he shouldna pause while the sun's shining, and see God's meaning. It cannot be but good."

The lad's friend who understood him best stopped short, like his mother, with something in his throat that marred his utterance. Why was it? Colin looked up with the sunshine in his eyes, and laughed with a little annoyance, a little impatience. He was no more afraid of his lot, nor of what the next turn in the path would bring, than a child is who knows no evil. Life was not solemn, but glorious, a thing to be conquered and made beautiful, to his eyes. He did not understand what they meant by their faltering and their fears.

"I feel, on the whole, disposed to accept Sir Thomas's offer," said the young prince. "It is no favour, for I am quite able to be his boy's tutor, as he says; and I see nothing particularly serious in it either; most Scotch students stop short sometime and have a spell of teaching. I have been tutor at Ardmartin; I don't mind being tutor at Wodensbourne. I would not be dependent on Sir Thomas Frankland or any man," said Colin; "but I am glad to work for myself, and free you, father. I know you are willing to keep me at college, but you have plenty to do for Archie and the rest; and now it is my turn; I may help myself and them too," cried the youth, glad to disguise in that view of the matter the thrill of delight at his new prospects, which came from a very different source. "It will give us a little time, as you say, to think it all over," he continued, after a momentary pause, and turned upon his mother with a smile. "Is there anything to look melancholy about?" said Colin, tossing back from his forehead the clouds of his brown hair.

"Oh, no, no, God forbid!" said the Mistress—"nothing but hope and the blessing of God;" but she turned aside from the table, and began to put away the things by way of concealing the tears that welled up to her tender eyes; though neither she nor any one for her could have told why.

"Never mind your mother," said the farmer, "though it's out

of the common to see a cloud on her face when there's no cloud to speak of on the sky. But women are aye having freits and fancies. I think mysel' it's the wisest thing ye can do to close with Sir Thomas's proposal. I wouldna say but you'll see a good deal o' the world," said the farmer, shrewd but ignorant; "not that I'm so simple as to suppose that an English gentleman's country-seat will bring you to onything very extraordinary in the way of company; but still, that class of folk is wonderfully connected, and ye might see mair there in a season than you could here in a lifetime. It's time I were looking after Archie and the men," said big Colin; "it's no often I'm so late in the morning. I suppose you'll write to Sir Thomas yourself, and make a' the arrangements. Ye can say we're quite content, and pleased at his thoughtfulness. If that's no to your mind, Colin, I'm sorry for it; for a man should be aye man enough to give thanks where thanks are due." With this last admonition big Colin of Ramore took up his hat and went off to his fields. "I wish the callant didna keep a grudge," he said to himself, as he went upon his cheerful way. "If he were to set up in rivalry wi' young Frankland!" but with the thought a certain smile came upon the father's face. He too could not refrain from a certain contempt of the baronet's dainty son; and there was scarcely any limit to his pride and confidence in his boy.

The Mistress occupied herself in putting things to rights in the parlour long after her husband had gone to the fields. She thought Lauderdale too wanted to be alone with Colin; and, with natural jealousy, could not permit the first word of counsel to come from any lips but her own. The mistress had no baby to occupy her in these days; the little one whom she had on her bosom at the opening of this history, who bore her own name and her own smile, and was the one maiden blossom of her life, had gone back to God who gave her; and, when her

boys were at school, the gentle woman was alone. There was little doing in the dairy just then, and Mrs. Campbell had planned her occupations so as to have all the time that was possible to enjoy her son's society. So she had no special call upon her at that moment, and lingered over her little businesses, till Lauderdale, who would fain have said his say, strayed out in despair, finding no room for him. "When you've finished your letter, Colin, you'll find me on the hill," he said, as he went out; and could not refrain from a murmur in his own mind at the troublesome cares of "thae women." "They're sweet to see about a house, and the place is hame where they are," said the philosopher to himself with a sigh; "but, oh, such fykes as they ware their hearts on!" The mistress's "fykes," however, were over when the stranger left the house. She came softly to Colin's table, where he was writing, and sat down beside him. As for Colin, he was so much absorbed in his letter that he did not observe his mother; and it was only when he lifted his head to consider a sentence, and found her before him, that he woke up, with a little start, out of that more agreeable occupation, and asked, "Do you want me?" with a look of annoyance which went to the mistress's heart.

"Yes, Colin, I want you just for a moment," said his mother. "I want to speak to you of this new change in your life. Your father thinks nothing but it's Sir Thomas Frankland you're going to, to be tutor to his boys; but, oh, Colin, I ken better! It's no the fine house and the new life that lights such light in my laddie's eye. Colin, listen to me. She's far above you in this world, though it's no to be looked for that I could think ony woman was above you; but she's a lady with mony wooers, and you're but a poor man's son. Oh, Colin, my man! dinna gang near that place, nor put yourself in the way of evil, if you havena confidence both in her and yoursel'. Do you think you can see her day by day and no break your heart? or do you think she's

worthy of a heart to be thrown away under her feet? Or, oh, my laddie! tell me this first of a'—do you think you could ask her, or she could consent, to lose fortune and grandeur for your sake? Colin, I'm no joking; it's awfu' earnest, whatever you may think. Tell me—if you've ony regard for your mother, or wish her ony kind of comfort the time you're away."

This Mrs. Campbell said with tears shining in her eyes, and a look of entreaty in her face, which Colin had hard ado to meet. But the lad was full of his own thoughts, and impatient of the interruption which detained him.

"I wish I knew what you meant," he said pettishly. "I wish you would not talk of—people who have nothing to do with my poor little concerns. Surely, I may be suffered to engage in ordinary work like other people," said Colin. "As for the lady you speak of—"

And here the youth paused with a natural smile lurking at the corners of his lips—a smile of youthful confidence and self-gratulation. Not for a kingdom would the young hero have boasted of any look or word she had ever bestowed upon him; but he could not deny himself the delicious consciousness that she must have had something to do with this proposal—that it must have been her suggestion, or at least supported, seconded by her. Only through her could her uncle have known that he was tutor at Ardmartin; and the thought that it was she herself who was taking what maidenly means she could for their speedy reunion was too sweet to Colin's heart to be breathed in words, even if he could have done it without a betrayal of his hopes.

"Ay, Colin, the lady—" said his mother; "you say no more in words, but your eye smiles, and your mouth, and I see the flush on your cheek. She's bonnie and sweet and fair-spoken, and I canna think she means ony harm; but, oh, Colin, my man, mind what a difference in this world! You've nothing to offer her like what she's been used to," said the innocent woman,

"and if I was to see my son come back breaking his heart for ane that was above his reach, and maybe no worthy!—" She could not say any more, partly because she had exhausted herself, partly because Colin rose from the table with a flush of excitement, which made his mother tremble.

"Worthy of me!" said the young man, with a kind of groan, "worthy of me! Mother, I don't think you know what you are saying. I am going to Wodensbourne whatever happens. It may be for good or for evil; I can't tell; but I am going, and you must ask me no further questions—not on this point. I am to be tutor to Sir Thomas Frankland's boy," said Colin, sitting down, with the smile again in his eyes. "Nothing more—and what could happen better to a poor Scotch student? He might have had a Cambridge man, and he chooses me. Let me finish my letter, mother dear."

"He wouldna get many Cambridge men, or ony other men, like my boy," said the mother, half reassured; and she rearranged with her hands, that trembled a little, the writing-desk, which Colin's hasty movements had thrust out of the way.

"Ah, mother, but a Scotch University does not count for the same as an English one," said Colin, with a smile and a sigh; "it is not for my gifts Sir Thomas has chosen me," he added, somewhat impatiently, taking up his pen again. What was it for? That old obligation of Harry Frankland's life saved, which Colin had always treated as a fiction? or the sweet influence of some one who knew that Colin loved her? Which was it? If the youth determined it should be the last, could anybody wonder? He bent his head again over his paper, and wrote, with his heart beating high, that acceptance which was to restore him to her society. As for the Mistress, she left her son, and went about her homely business, wiping some tears from her eyes. "I kenna what woman could close her heart," she said to herself, with a little sob, in her ignorance and innocence. "Oh, if she's

only worthy!" but, for all that, the mother's heart was heavy within her, though she could not have told why.

The letter was finished and sealed up before Colin joined his friend on the hillside, where Lauderdale was straying about with his hands in his pockets, breathing long sighs into the fresh air, and unable to restrain, or account for, his own restlessness and uneasiness. One of those great dramas of sunshine and shadow, which are familiar to the Holy Loch, was going on just then among the hills, and the philosopher had made various attempts to interest himself in those wonderful alternations of gloom and light, but without avail. Nature, which is so full of interest when the heart is unoccupied, dwindles and grows pale in presence of the poorest human creature who throws a shadow into her sunshine. Not all those wonderful gleams of light—not all those clouds, driven wildly like so many gigantic phantoms into the solemn hollows, could touch the heart of the man who was trembling for his friend. Lauderdale roused himself up when Colin came to him, and met him cheerfully. "So you've written your letter?" he said, "and accepted the offer? I thought as much, by your eye."

"You did not need to consult my eye," said Colin, gaily. "I said as much. But I must walk down the loch a mile or two to meet the postman. Will you come? Let us take the good of the hills," said the youth, with his heart running over. "Who can tell when we may be here again together? I like this autumn weather, with its stormy colours; and I suppose now my fortune, as you call it, will lead me to a flat country—that is, for a year or two at least."

"Ay," said Lauderdale, with a kind of groan; "that is how the world appears at your years. Who can tell when we may be here again together? Who can tell, laddie, what thoughts may be in our hearts when we *are* here again? I never have any security myself, when I leave a place, that I'll ever dare to

come back," said the meditative man. "The innocent fields might have a cruel aspect, as if God had cursed them, and, for anything I know, I might hate the flowers that could bloom, and the sun that could shine, and had no heart for my trouble. No that you understand what I'm meaning; but that's the way it affects a man like me."

"What are you thinking of?" cried Colin, with a little dismay; "one would fancy you saw some terrible evil approaching. Of course the future is uncertain, but I am not particularly alarmed by anything that appears to me. What are you thinking of, Lauderdale? Your own career?"

"Oh, ay, just my ain career," said Lauderdale, with a smile; "such a career to make a work about! though I am just as content as most men. I mind when my ain spirit was whiles uplifted as yours is, laddie; it's *that* that makes a man think. It comes natural to the time of life, like the bright eye and the bloom on the cheek; and there's no sentence of death in it either, if you come to that," he went on to himself after a pause. "Life holds on—it aye holds on; a hope mair or less makes little count. And without the struggle, never man that was worth calling man came to his full stature." All this Lauderdale kept saying to himself as he descended the hillside, leaping here and there over a half-concealed streamlet, and making his way through the withered ferns and the long tangled streamers of the bramble, which caught at him as he passed. He was not so skilful in overcoming these obstacles as Colin, who was to the manner born; and he got a little out of breath as he followed the lad, who, catching his monologue by intervals in the descent, looked at the melancholy philosopher with his young eyes, which laughed, and did not understand.

"I wonder what you are thinking of," said Colin. "Not of me, certainly; but I see you are afraid of something, as if I were going to encounter a great danger. Lauderdale," said the lad,

stopping and laying his hand on his friend's arm for one confidential moment, "whatever danger there is, I *have* encountered it. Don't be afraid for me."

"I was saying nothing about you, callant," said Lauderdale, pettishly. Why should I aye be thinking of you? A man has more things to consider in this life than the vagaries of a slip of a laddie, that doesna see where he's bound for. I'm thinking of things far out of your way," said the philosopher; "of disappointments and heart-breaks, and a' the eclipses that are invisible to common e'en. I've seen many in my day. I've seen a trifling change that made no difference to the world quench a' the light and a' the comfort out of life. There's more things in heaven or earth than were ever dreamt of at your years. And whiles a man wonders how, for very pity, God can stay still in His heavens and look on—"

Colin could not say anything to the groan with which his friend broke off. He was troubled and puzzled, and could not make it out. They went on together along the white line of road, on which, far off in the distance, the youth already saw the postman whom he was hastening to meet; and, busy as he was with his own thoughts, Colin had already forgotten to inquire what his companion referred to, when his attention, which had wandered completely away, was suddenly recalled again by the voice at his side.

"I'm speaking like a man that cannot see the end," said Lauderdale, "which is clear to Him, if there's any meaning in life. You're for taking your chance and posting your letter, laddie! and you ken nothing about any nonsense that an old fool like me may be maundering. For one thing, there's aye plenty to divert the mind in this country," said the philosopher, with a sigh; and stood still at the foot of the long slope they had just descended, looking with a wistful abstracted look upon the loch and the hills; at which change of mood Colin

could not restrain himself, but with ready boyish mirth laughed aloud.

"What has this country to do with it all? You are in a very queer mood to-day, Lauderdale—one moment as solemn and mysterious as if you knew of some great calamity, and the next talking of the country. What do you mean I wonder?" But his wonder was not very deep, and stirred lightly in the heart which was full of so many wishes and ambitions of its own. With that letter in his hand, and that new life before him, how could he help but look at the lonely man by his side with a half-divine compassion?—a man to whom life offered no prizes, and scarcely any hopes. He was aware in his heart that Lauderdale was anxious about himself, and the thought of that unnecessary solicitude moved Colin half to laughter. Poor Lauderdale—upon whom he looked down from the elevation of his young life with the tenderest pity! He smiled upon his friend in his exaltation and superiority. "You are more inexplicable than usual to-day. I wonder what you mean?" said Colin with all the sunshine of youth and joy, defying evil forebodings, in his eyes.

"It would take a wise man to tell," said Lauderdale; "I would not pretend, for my own part, to fathom what any fool might mean—much less what I mean myself, that have glimmerings of sense at times. Yon sunshine's awfu' prying about the hills. Light's aye inquisitive, and would fain be at the bottom of every mystery—which is, maybe, the reason," said the speculative observer, "why there's nae grandeur to speak of, nor meaning, according to mortal notions, without clouds and darkness. Yonder's your postman, callant. Give him the letter and be done with it. I whiles find myself wondering how it is that we take so little thought to God's meanings—what ye might call His lighter meanings—His easy verses and such-like, that are thrown about the world, in the winds and the sky. To be sure, I ken

just as well as you do that it's currents of air, and masses of vapour, and electricity, and all the rest of it. It's awfu' easy learning the words—but will you tell me there's no meaning to a man's heart and soul in the like of that?" said Colin's companion, stopping suddenly with a sigh of impatience and vexation, which had to do with something more vital than the clouds. Just then, nature truly seemed to have come to a pause, and to be standing still, like themselves, looking on. The sky that was so blue and broad a moment since had contracted to a black vault over the Holy Loch. Blackness that was positive and not a mere negation frowned out of all the half-disclosed mysterious hollows of the hills. The leaves that remained on the trees thrilled with a spasmodic shiver, and the little ripples came crowding up on the beach with a sighing suppressed moan of suspense and apprehension. So, at least, it seemed to one if not both of the spectators standing by.

"It means a thunderstorm, in the first place," said Colin; "look how it begins to come down in a torrent of gloom over Loch Goil. We have just time to get under shelter. It is very well for us we are so near Ramore."

"Ay—" said Lauderdale. He repeated the syllable over again and again as they hurried back. "But the time will come, when we'll no be near Ramore," he said to himself as the storm reached him and dashed in his face not twenty yards from the open door. Colin's laugh, as he reached with a bound the kindly portal, was all the answer which youth and hope gave to experience. The boy was not to be discouraged on that sweet threshold of his life.

CHAPTER XIV.

WODENSBOURNE was as different from any house that Colin had ever seen before, as the low flat country, rich and damp and monotonous, was unlike the infinitely varied landscape to which his eye had been accustomed all his life. The florid upholstery of Ardmartin contrasted almost as strangely with the sober magnificence of the old family-house, in which the Franklands had lived and died for generations, as did the simple little rooms to which Colin had been accustomed in his father's house. Perhaps, on the whole, Ramore, where everything was for use and nothing for show, was less unharmonious with all he saw about him than the equipments of the bran new castle, all built out of new money, and gilded and lackered to a climax of domestic finery. Colin's pupil was the invalid of the family; a boy of twelve, who could not go to Eton like his brothers, but whom the good-natured baronet thought, as was natural, the cleverest of his family.—"That's why I wanted you so much, Campbell," Sir Thomas said, by way of setting Colin at ease in his new occupation; "he's not a boy to be kept to classics isn't Charley—there's nothing that boy wouldn't master—and shut up as he has to be, with his wretched health, he wants a little variety. I've always heard you took a wider range in Scotland; that's what I want for my boy." It was with this exposition of his patron's wishes that the new tutor was introduced to his duties at Wodensbourne. But a terrible disappointment awaited the young man, a disappointment utterly unforeseen. There was nobody there but Sir Thomas himself, and Charley, and some

little ones still in the nursery. "We're all by ourselves, but you won't mind," said the baronet, who seemed to think it all the better for Colin; "my lady and Matty will be home before Christmas, and you can get yourself settled comfortably in the meantime. Lady Frankland is with her sister, who is in very bad health. I don't know what people mean by getting into bad health—women, too, that can't go in for free living and that sort of thing," said Sir Thomas. "The place looks dreary without the ladies, but they'll be back before Christmas," and he went to sleep after dinner as usual, and left the young tutor at the other side of the table sitting in a kind of stupefied amazement and mortification, in the silence, wondering what he came here for, and where all his hopes and brilliant auguries had gone.

Perhaps Colin did not know what he himself meant when he accepted Sir Thomas Frankland's proposal. He thought he was coming to live in Matty's society, to be her companion, to walk with her and talk with her, as he had done at Ardmartin; but, when he arrived to find Wodensbourne deserted, with nothing to be seen but Sir Thomas and a nursery governess, who sometimes emerged with her little pupils from the unknown regions upstairs, and was very civil to the new tutor, Colin's disappointment was overwhelming. He despised himself with a bitterness only to be equalled by the brilliancy of those vain expectations over which he laughed in youthful rage and scorn. It was not to be Matty's companion he had come; it was not to see, however far off, any portion of the great world which he could not help imagining sometimes must be visible from such an elevation. It was only to train Charley's precocious intellect, and amuse the baronet a little at dinner. After dinner Sir Thomas went to sleep, and even Charley was out of the way, and the short winter days closed down early over the great house, over the damp woods and silent park, which kept repeating themselves, day by day, upon Colin's wearied brain. There was not

even an undulation within sight, nothing higher than the dull line of trees, which after a while it made him sick to look at. To be sure, the sunshine now and then caught upon the lofty lantern of Earie Cathedral, and by that means woke up a gleam of light on the flat country; but that, and the daily conflict with Charley's sharp invalid understanding, and the sight of Sir Thomas sleeping after dinner, conveyed no exhilaration to speak of to lighten the dismal revulsion of poor Colin's thoughts. His heart rose indignant sometimes, which did him more good. This was the gulf of dismay he tumbled into without defence or preparation after the burst of hope and foolish youthful delight with which he left Ramore.

As for the society at Wodensbourne, it was at the present moment of the most limited description. Colin, who was inexperienced, roused up out of his dullness a little when he heard that two of the canons of Earie were coming to dinner one evening. The innocent Scotch lad woke himself up, with a little curiosity about the clerical dignitaries, of whom he knew nothing, and a good deal of anxiety to comport himself as became the representative of a Scotch University, about whom he did not doubt the visitors would be a little curious. It struck Colin with the oddest surprise and disappointment, to find that the canons of Earie were perfectly indifferent about the Scotch student. The curate of the parish, indeed, who was also dining at Wodensbourne that day, was wonderfully civil to the new tutor. He told him that he understood the Scotch mountains were very near as fine as Switzerland, and that he hoped to see them some day, though the curious prejudices about Sunday and the whisky-drinking must come very much in the way of closer intercourse; at which speech Colin's indignation and amusement would have been wonderful to see, had any one been there who cared to notice how the lad was looking. On the Sundays, Colin and his pupil went along the level ways

to the quaint old mossy church, to which this same curate was devoting all his time and thoughts by way of restoration. The Scotch youth had never seen anything at once so homely and so noble as this little church in the fen-country. He thought it nothing less than a poem in stone, a pathetic old psalm of human life and death, joining in for ever and ever, with the tenderest, sad responses, in the worship of heaven. Never anywhere had he felt so clearly how the dead were waiting for the great Easter to come, nor seen Christianity standing so plainly between the beginning and the end; but when Colin, with his Scotch ideas, heard the curious little sermons to which his curate gave utterance under that roof, all consecrated and holy with the sorrows and hopes of ages, it made the strangest anti-climax in the youth's thoughts. He laughed to himself when he came out, not because he was disposed to laughter, but because it was the only alternative he had; and Sir Thomas, who had a glimmering perception that this must be something new to his inexperienced guest, gave a doubtful sort of smile, not knowing how to take Colin's strange looks.

"You don't believe in saints' days, and such like, in Scotland?" said the perplexed baronet; "and of course the sermon does not count for so much with us."

"No, it does not count for much," said Colin; and they did not enter further into the subject.

As for the young man himself, who had still upon his mind the feeling that he was to be a Scotch minister, the lesson was the strangest possible; for, being Scotch, he could not help listening to the sermon according to the usage of his nation. The curate, after he had said those prayers which are all but divine in their comprehension of the wants of humanity, told his people how wonderfully their beloved Church had provided for all their wants; how sweet it was to recollect that this was the day which had been appointed the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

—and how it was their duty to meditate a fact so touching and so important. Colin thought of the Holy Loch, and the minister's critics there, and laughed to himself, perhaps a little bitterly. He felt as if he had given up his own career—the natural life to which he was born; and at this distance the usual enchantments of nature began to work, and in his heart he asked himself what he was to gain by transferring his lot and hopes to this wealthy country, where so many things were fairer, and after which he had been hankering so long. The curate's sermons struck him as a kind of comical climax to his disappointments—and the curate himself who looked at Colin much as he might have looked at a South-Sea Islander, and spoke of the Scotch whisky and Scotch Sabbaths. Poor curate! He knew a great deal more than Colin did about some things, and, if he did not understand how to preach, that was not the fault of his college; neither did they convey much information at that seat of learning about the northern half of the British island—no more than they did at Glasgow about the curious specimen of humanity which is known as a curate on the brighter side of the Tweed.

All these things went through Colin's mind as he sat in the dining-room after dinner contemplating Sir Thomas's nap, which was not of itself an elevating spectacle. He thought to himself at that moment that he was but fulfilling the office of a drudge at Wodensbourne, which anybody could fill. It did not require those abilities which had won with acclamation the prize in the philosophy class to teach Charley Frankland the elements of science; and all the emulations and glories of his college career came back to Colin's mind. The little public of the University had begun to think of him—to predict what he would do, and anticipate his success, at home; but here, who knew anything about him? These thoughts disturbed him much as he sat watching the fire gleam in the wainscot, and calculating the

recurrence of that next great snore which would wake Sir Thomas, and make him sit up of a sudden and look fiercely at his companion before he murmured out a "Beg your pardon," and went to sleep again. Not an interesting prospect certainly. Should he go home? should he represent to the baronet, when he woke up for the night, that it had all been a mistake, and that his present office was perfectly unsuited to his ambition and his hopes? But then what could he say? for after all it was as Charley Frankland's tutor simply, and with his eyes open, that he came to Wodensbourne, and Sir Thomas had said nothing about the society of his niece, or any other society, to tempt him thither. Colin sat in a bitterness of discontent, which would have been incredible to him a few weeks before, pondering these questions. There was not a sound to be heard, but the dropping of the ashes on the hearth, and Sir Thomas's heavy breathing as he slept. Life went on velvet slippers in the great house from which Colin would gladly have escaped (he thought) to the poorest cottage on the Holy Loch. He could not help recalling his shabby little room in Glasgow, and Lauderdale's long comments upon life, and all the talk and the thoughts that made existence bright in that miserable little place, which Sir Thomas Frankland's grooms would not have condescended to live in, but which the unfortunate young tutor thought of with longing as he sat dreary in the great dining-room. What did it matter to him that the floor was soft with Turkey carpets, that the wine on the table was of the most renowned vintages, and that his slumbering companion in the great easy-chair was the head of one of the oldest commoner families in England—a baronet and a county member? Colin after all was only a son of the soil; he longed for his Glasgow attic, and his companions who spoke the dialect of that remarkable but unlovely city, and felt bitterly in his heart that he had been cheated. Yet it was hard to say to any one—hard even to

put in words to himself—what the cheat was. It was a deception he had practised on himself, and in the bitterness of his disappointment the youth refused to admit that anybody's absence was the secret of his mortification. What was she to him?—a great lady as far out of his reach as the moon or the stars, and who no doubt had forgotten his very name.

These were not pleasant thoughts to season the solitude; and he sat hugging them for a great many evenings before Sir Thomas awoke, and addressed, as he generally did, a few good-humoured, stupid observations to the lad whom, to be sure, the baronet found a considerable bore, and did not know what to do with. Sir Thomas could not forget his obligations to the young man who had saved Harry's life; and thus it was, from pure gratitude, that he made Colin miserable—though there was no gratitude at all, nor even much respect, in the summary judgment which the youth formed of the heavy 'squire.

This was how matters were going on when Wodensbourne and the world, and everything human, suddenly, all at once, sustained again a change to Colin. He had been living thus, for six weary weeks—during which time he felt himself getting morose, ill-tempered, and miserable—writing sharp letters home, in which he would not confess to any special disappointment, but expressed himself in general terms of bitterness like a young misanthrope, and in every respect making himself, and those who cared for him, unhappy. Even the verses, which did very well to express the tender griefs of sentiment, had been thrown aside at this crisis; for there was nothing melodious in his feelings, and he could not say in sweet rhymes and musical cadences how angry and wretched he was. He was sitting in such a mood one dreary December evening when it was raining fast outside and everything was silent within—as was natural in a well-regulated household where the servants knew their duty, and the nursery was half a mile away through worlds of

complicated passages. Sir Thomas was asleep as usual, and, with his eyes shut and his mouth open, the excellent baronet was not, as we have already said, an elevating spectacle; and, at the other end of the table, sat Colin, chafing out his young soul with such thoughts of what was not, but might have been, as youth does not know how to avoid. It was just then, when he was going over his long succession of miseries—thinking of his natural career cut short for the sake of this dreary penance of which nothing could ever come—that Colin was startled by the sound of wheels coming up the wintry avenue. He could not venture to imagine to himself what it might be, though he listened as if for life and death; he heard the sounds of an arrival and the indistinct hum of voices which he could not distinguish, without feeling that he had any right to stir from the table to inquire what it meant; and there he sat accordingly, with his hair thrust back from his forehead and his great eyes gleaming out from the noiseless atmosphere, when the door opened and a pretty figure, all eager and glowing with life, looked into the room. Colin was too much absorbed, too anxious, and felt too deeply how much was involved, to be capable even of rising up to greet her as an indifferent man would have done. He sat and gazed at her as she darted in like a fairy creature, bringing every kind of radiance in her train.

"Here they are, aunty!" cried Miss Matty; and she came in flying in her cloak, with the hood still over her head and great raindrops on it, which she had caught as she jumped out of the carriage. While Colin sat gazing at her, wondering if it was some deluding apparition, or, in reality, the new revelation of life and love that it seemed to be, Matty had thrown herself upon Sir Thomas and woke the worthy baronet by kissing him, which was a pretty sight to behold. "Here we are, uncle; wake up!" cried Matty; "my lady ran to the nursery first, but I came to you, as I always do." And the little witch looked up

at Colin, with a glance under which heaven and earth changed to the lad. He stumbled to his feet, while Sir Thomas rubbed his astonished eyes. What could Colin say? He stood waiting for a word, seeing the little figure in a halo of light and fanciful glory. "How do you do? I knew you were here," said Miss Matty, putting out two fingers to him while she still hung over her uncle. And presently Lady Frankland came in, and the room became full of pleasant din and commotion as was inevitable. When Colin made a move as if to leave them, fearful of being in the way, Miss Matty called to him, "Oh, don't go, please; we are going to have tea, and my lady must be served without giving her any trouble, and I want you to help me," said Matty; and so the evening that had begun in gloom ended in a kind of subdued glory too sweet to be real; surely too good to be true.

Lady Frankland sat talking to her husband of their reason for coming back so suddenly (which was sad enough, being an unexpected death in the house: but that did not make much difference to the two women who were coming home); Matty kept coming and going between the tea-table and the fire, sending Colin on all sorts of errands, and making comments to him aside on what her aunt was saying. "Only fancy the long dreary drive we have had, and my uncle and Mr. Campbell making themselves so cozy," the little siren said, kneeling down before the fire with still one drop of rain sparkling on her bright locks. And the effect was such that Colin lost his head altogether, and could not have affirmed, had he been questioned on his oath, that he had not enjoyed himself greatly all the time. He took Lady Frankland her tea, and listened to all the domestic chatter as if it had been the talk of angels; and was as pleased when the mistress of the house thanked him for his kindness to Charley, as if he had not thought Charley a wretched little nuisance a few hours ago. He did not in the least know who

the people were about whom the two ladies kept up such an unceasing talk, and, perhaps, under other circumstances would have laughed at this sweet-toned gossip, with all its lively comments upon nothing, and incessant personalities; but, at the present moment, Colin had said good-bye to reason, and could not anyhow defend himself against the sudden happiness which seized upon him without any notice. While Sir Thomas and his wife sat on either side of the great fire, and Matty kept darting in and out between them, Colin sat behind near the impromptu tea-table, and listened and felt that the world was changed. If he could have had time to think, he might have been ashamed of himself; but then he had no time to think, and in the meantime he was happy, a sensation not to be gainsaid or rejected; and so fled the few blessed hours of the first evening of Matty's return.

When he had gone up stairs, and had heard, at a distance, the sound of the last good-night, and was fairly shut up again in the silence of his own room, the youth, for the first time, began to realize what he was doing. He paused, with a little consternation, a little fright, to question himself. For the first time, he saw clearly, without any possibility of self-delusion, what it was which had brought him here, and which made all the difference to him between happiness and misery. It was hard to realize now the state of mind he had been in a few hours before; but he did it, by dint of a great exertion, and saw, with a distinctness which alarmed him, how it was that everything had altered in his eyes. It was Matty's presence that made all the difference between this subdued thrill of happiness and that blank of impatient and mortified misery. The young man tried to stand still and consider the reality of his position. He had stopped in his career, made a voluntary pause in his life, entered upon a species of existence which he felt in his heart was not more, but less, noble (for him) than his previous course—and

what was it for? All for the uncertain smile, for the society—which might fail him at any time—of a woman so far out of his way, so utterly removed from his reach, as Matilda Frankland? For a moment, the youth was dismayed, and stopped short, Wisdom and Truth whispering in his ear. Love might be fair, but he knew enough to know that life must not be subservient to that witchery; and Colin's good angel spoke to him in the silence, and bade him flee. Better to go back, and at once, to the grey and sombre world, where all his duties awaited him, than to stay here in this fool's paradise. As he thought so he got up, and began to pace about his room, as though it had been a cage. Best to flee—it might take all the light out of his life and break his heart, but what else had he to look for sooner or later? He sat up half the night, still pacing about his room, hesitating over his fate, while the December storm raged outside. What was he to do? When he dropped to sleep at last, his heart betrayed him, and strayed away into celestial worlds of dreaming. He woke, still undecided, as he thought, to see the earliest wintry gleam of sunshine stealing in through his shutters. What was he to do? But already the daylight made him feel his terrors as so many shadows. His heart was a traitor, and he was glad to find it so; and that moment of indecision settled more surely than ever the bondage in which he seemed to have entangled his life.

CHAPTER XV.

From that day life flew upon celestial wings for Charley Frankland's tutor. It was not that love-making proved possible, or that existence at Wodensbourne became at all what it had been at Ardmartin. The difference was in the atmosphere, which was now bright with all kinds of gladsome chances, and pervaded by anticipations—a charm which, at Colin's age, was more than reality. He never knew what moment of delight might come to him any day—what words might be said, or smiles shed upon him. Such an enchantment could not, indeed, have lasted very long; but, in the meantime, it was infinitely sweet, and made his life like a romance to the young man. There was nobody at Wodensbourne to occupy Miss Matty, or withdraw her attention from her young worshipper; and Colin, with his poetic temperament, and his youthful genius, and all the simplicities and inexperience which rendered him so different from the other clever young men who had been seen or heard of in that region, was very delightful company, even when he was not engaged in any acts of worship. Lady Frankland herself acknowledged that Mr. Campbell was a great acquisition. "He is not the least like other people," said the lady of the house; "but you must take care not to let him fall in love with you, Matty;" and both the ladies laughed softly as they sat over their cup of tea. As for Matty, when she went to dress for dinner, after that admonition, she put on tartan ribbons over her white dress, partly, to be sure, because they were the fashion; but chiefly to please Colin, who knew rather less about tartan than she did, and had not the

remotest idea that the many-coloured sash had any reference to himself.

"I love Scotland," the little witch said to him, when he came into the drawing-room, to which he was now admitted during Sir Thomas's nap—and, to tell the truth, Lady Frankland herself had just closed her eyes in a gentle doze, in her easy chair—"but, though you are a Scotchman, you don't take the least notice of my ribbons; I am very fond of Scotland," said Matty; —"and the Scotch," the wicked little girl added, with a glance at him, which made Colin's heart leap in his deluded breast.

"Then I am very glad to be Scotch," said the youth, and stooped down over the end of the sash till Matty thought he meant to kiss it, which was a more decided act of homage than it would be expedient, under the circumstances, to permit.

"Don't talk like everybody else," said Miss Matty; "that does not make any difference—you were always glad to be Scotch. I know you all think you are so much better and cleverer than we are in England. But, tell me, do you still mean to be a Scotch minister? I wish you would not," said Matty, with a little pout. And then Colin laughed—half with pleasure at what he thought her interest in him, and half with a quaint recollection which belonged only to himself.

"I don't think I could preach about the twentieth Sunday after Trinity," he said with a smile; which, however, was a speech Miss Matty did not understand.

"People here don't preach as you do in Scotland," said the English girl, with a little offence. "You are always preaching, and that is what makes it so dull. But what is the good of being a minister? There are plenty of dull people to be ministers; you who are so clever—"

"Am I clever?" said Colin. "I am Charley's tutor—it does not require a great deal of genius—" but while he spoke, his eyes —which Matty did not comprehend, which always went leagues

further than she could follow—kindled up a little. He looked a long way beyond her, and no doubt he saw something; but it piqued her not to be able to follow him, and find out what he meant.

"If you had done what I wished, and gone to Oxford, Campbell," said Sir Thomas, whose repose had been interrupted earlier than usual; "I can't say much about what I could have done myself, for I have heaps of boys of my own to provide for; but, if you're bent on going into the Church, something would certainly have turned up for you. I don't say there's much of a career in the Church for an ambitious young fellow, but still, if you do work well and have a few friends—. As for your Scotch Church, I don't know very much about it," said the baronet, candidly. "I never knew any one who did. What a bore it used to be a dozen years ago, when there was all that row; and now, I suppose, you're all at sixes and sevens, ain't you?" asked the ingenuous legislator. "I suppose whisky and controversy go together somehow." Sir Thomas got himself packed into the corner of a sofa very comfortably, as he spoke, and took no notice of the lightning in Colin's eyes.

"Oh, uncle! don't," said Miss Matty; "don't you know that the Presbyterians are all going to give up and join the Church? and it's all to be the same both in England and Scotland? You need not laugh. I assure you I know quite well what I am saying," said the little beauty, with a look of dignity. "I have seen it in the papers; such funny papers!—with little paragraphs about accidents, and about people getting silver snuff-boxes!—but all the same, they say what I tell you. There's to be no Presbyterians and no precentors, and none of their wicked ways, coming into church with their hats on, and staring all round instead of saying their prayers; and all the ministers are to be made into clergymen—priests and deacons, you know; and they are going to have bishops and proper service like other

people. Mr. Campbell," said Matty, looking up at him with a little emphasis, to mark that, for once, she was calling him formally by his name—"knows it is quite true."

"Humph," said Sir Thomas, "I know better; I know how Campbell, there, looked the other day when he came out of church. I know the Scotch and their ways of thinking. Go and make the tea, and don't talk of what you don't understand. But, as for you, Campbell, if you have a mind for the University and to go in for the Church—"

But this was more than Colin, being twenty, and a Scotchman, could bear.

"I *am* going in for the Church," said the lad, doing all he could to keep down the excitement at which Sir Thomas would have laughed, "but it did not in the least touch my heart the other day to know that it was the twentieth Sunday after Trinity. Devotion is a great matter," said the young Scotchman, "I grant you have the advantage over us there; but it would not do in Scotland to preach about the Church's goodness, and what she had appointed for such or such a day. We preach very stupid sermons, I dare say; but at least we mean to teach somebody something—what God looks for at their hands, or what they may look for at His. It is more an occupation for a man," cried the young revolutionary, "than reading the sublimest of prayers. I am going in for the Church—but it is the Church of Scotland," said Colin. He drew himself up with a grand youthful dignity, which was much lost on Sir Thomas, who, for his part, looked at his new tutor with eyes of sober wonderment, and did not understand what this emotion meant.

"There is no occasion for excitement," said the baronet; "nobody now-a-days meddles with a man's convictions; indeed, Harry would say, it's a great thing to have any convictions. That is how the young men talk now-a-days," said Sir Thomas; and he moved off the sofa again, and yawned, though not un-

civilly. As for Miss Matty, she came stealing up when she had made the tea, with her cup in her hand.

"So you do mean to be a minister?" she said, in a half whisper, with a deprecating look. Lady Frankland had roused up, like her husband, and the two were talking, and did not take any notice of Matty's proceedings with the harmless tutor. The young lady was quite free to play with her mouse a little, and entered upon the amusement with zest, as was natural. "You mean to shut yourself up in a square house, with five windows in front, like the poor gentleman who has such red hair; and never see anybody but the old women in the parish, and have your life made miserable every Sunday by *that* precentor—"

"I hope I have a soul above precentors," said Colin, with a little laugh, which was unsteady still, however, with excitement; "and one might mend all that," he added a minute after, looking at her with a kind of wistful inquiry which he could not have put into words. What was it he meant to ask with his anxious eye? But he did not himself know.

"Oh yes," said Matty, "I know what you could do: you could get a little organ and marry somebody who would play it, and teach the people better; I know exactly what you could do," said the young lady with a piquant little touch of spite, and a look that startled Colin; and then she paused, and hung her head for a moment and blushed, or looked as if she blushed. "But you would not?" said Matty, softly, with a sidelong glance at her victim. "Don't marry anybody; no one is of any use after that. I don't approve of marrying, for my part, especially for a priest. Priests should always be detached, you know, from the world."

"Why?" said Colin. He was quite content to go on talking on such a subject for any length of time. "As for marrying, it is only your rich squires and great people who can marry when they please; we who have to make our own way in the world

—" said the young man, with a touch of grandeur, but was stopped by Miss Matty's sudden laughter.

"Oh, how simple you are! As if rich squires and great people, as you say, could marry when they pleased—as if any man could marry when he pleased!" cried Miss Matty, scornfully. "After all, we do count for something, we poor women; now and then, we can put even an eldest son out in his calculations. It is great fun too," said the young lady, and she laughed, and so did Colin, who could not help wondering what special case she might have in her eye, and listened with all the eagerness of a lover. "There is poor Harry—" said Miss Matty under her breath, and stopped short and laughed to herself and sipped her tea, while Colin lent an anxious ear. But nothing further followed that soft laughter. Colin sat on thorns, gazing at her with a world of questions in his face, but the siren looked at him no more. Poor Harry! Harry's natural rival was sensible of a thrill of jealous curiosity mingled with anxiety. What had she done to Harry, this witch who had beguiled Colin?—or was it not she who had done anything to him, but some other as pretty and as mischievous? Colin had no clue to the puzzle, but it gave him a new *accès* of half-conscious enmity to the heir of Wodensbourne.

After that talk there elapsed a few days during which Colin saw but little of Matty, who had visits to pay, and some solemn dinner-parties to attend in Lady Frankland's train. He had to spend the evenings by himself on these occasions after dining with Charley, who was not a very agreeable companion; and, when this invalid went to his room, as he did early, the young tutor found himself desolate enough in the great house, where no human bond existed between him and the little community within its walls. He was not in a state of mind to take kindly to abstract study at that moment of his existence, for Colin had passed out of the unconscious stage in which he had been at

Ardmartin. There, however much he might have wished to be out of temptation, he could not help himself, which was a wonderful consolation; but now he had come wilfully and knowingly into danger, and had become aware of it; and far more distinctly than ever before had become aware of the difference between himself and the object of his thoughts. Though he found it very possible at times to comfort himself with the thought that this was an ordinary interruption of a Scotch student's work, and noways represented the Armida's garden in which the knight lost both his vocation and his life, there were other moments and moods which were less easily manageable; and, on the whole, he wanted the stimulus of perpetual excitement to keep him from feeling the false position he was in, and the inexpediency of continuing it. Though this feeling haunted him all day, at night, in the drawing-room—which was brightened and made sweet by the fair English matron who was kind to Colin, and the fairer maiden who was the centre of all his thoughts—it vanished like an evil spirit, and left him with a sense that nowhere in the world could he have been so well; but, when the stimulus was withdrawn, the youth was left in a very woeful plight, conscious, to the bottom of his heart, that he ought to be elsewhere, and here was consuming his strength and life. He went out in the darkness of the December nights through the gloomy silent park into the little village with its feeble lights, where everybody and everything was unknown to him; and all the time his demon sat on his shoulder and asked what he did there. One evening while he strayed through the broken, irregular village-street, to all appearance looking at the dim cottage-windows and listening to the rude songs from the little ale-house, the curate encountered the tutor. Most probably the young priest, who was not remarkable for wisdom, imagined the Scotch lad to be in some danger; for he laid a kindly hand upon his arm and turned him away from the

vociferous little tavern, which was a vexation to the curate's soul. "I should like you to go up to the Parsonage with me, if you will only wait till I have seen this sick woman," he said; and Colin went in very willingly within the cottage porch to wait for his acquaintance, who had his prayer-book under his arm. The young Scotchman looked on with wondering eyes while the village priest knelt down by his parishioner's bedside and opened his book. Naturally there was a comparison always going on in Colin's mind. He was like a passive experimentalist, seeing all kinds of trials made before his eyes, and watching the result. "I wonder if they all think it is a spell," said Colin to himself; but he was rebuked and was silent when he heard the responses which the cottage folk made on their knees. When the curate had read his prayer he got up and said good-night, and went back to Colin; and this visitation of the sick was a very strange experience to the young Scotch observer, who stood revolving everything, with an eye to Scotland, at the cottage-door.

"You don't make use of our Common Prayer in Scotland?" said the curate; "pardon me for referring to it. One cannot help being sorry for people who shut themselves out from such an inestimable advantage. How did it come about?"

"I don't know," said Colin. "I suppose because Laud was a fool, and King Charles a ——"

"Hush, for goodness sake," said the curate, with a shiver. "What do you mean? such language is painful to listen to. The saints and martyrs should be spoken of in a different tone. You think that was the reason? Oh, no; it was your horrible Calvinism, and John Knox, and the mad influences of that unfortunate Reformation which has done us all so much harm; though I suppose you think differently in Scotland," he said with a little sigh, steering his young companion, of whose morality he felt uncertain, past the alehouse door.

"Did you never hear of John Knox's liturgy?" said the indignant Colin; "the saddest, passionate service! You always had time to say your prayers in England, but we had to snatch them as we could. And your prayers would not do for us now," said the Scotch experimentalist; "I wish they could; but it would be impossible. A Scotch peasant would have thought *that* an incantation you were reading. When you go to see a sick man, shouldn't you like to say, God save him, God forgive him, straight out of your heart without a book?" said the eager lad; at which question the curate looked up with wonder in the young man's face.

"I hope I do say it out of my heart," said the English priest, and stopped short, with a gravity that had a great effect upon Colin;—"but in words more sound than any words of mine," the curate added a moment after, which dispersed the reverential impression from the Scotch mind of the eager boy.

"I can't see that," said Colin, quickly, "in the church for common prayer, yes; at a bedside in a cottage, no. At least, I mean that's how we feel in Scotland—though I suppose you don't care much for our opinion," he added with some heat, thinking he saw a smile on his companion's face.

"Oh, yes, certainly; I have always understood that there is a great deal of intelligence in Scotland," said the curate, courteous as to a South-Sea Islander. "But people who have never known this inestimable advantage—I believe preaching is considered the great thing in the North?" he said with a little curiosity. "I wish society were a little more impressed by it among ourselves; but mere *information* even about spiritual matters is of so much less importance! though that, I daresay, is another point on which we don't agree?" the curate continued, pleasantly. He was just opening the gate into his own garden, which was invisible in the darkness, but which enclosed and surrounded a homely house with some lights in the windows, which, it was a

little comfort to Colin to perceive, was not much handsomer nor more imposing in appearance than the familiar manse on the borders of the Holy Loch.

"It depends on what you call spiritual matters," said the polemical youth. "I don't think a man can possibly get too much information about his relations with God, if only anybody could tell him anything; but certainly about ecclesiastical arrangements and the Christian year," said the irreverent young Scotchman, "a little might suffice;" and Colin spoke with the slightest inflection of contempt, always thinking of the twentieth Sunday after Trinity, and scorning what he did not understand, as was natural to his years.

"Ah, you don't know what you are saying," said the devout curate. "After you have spent a Christian Year, you will see what comfort and beauty there is in it. You say, 'if anybody could tell him anything.' I hope you have not got into a sceptical way of thinking. I should like very much to have a long talk with you," said the village priest, who was very good and very much in earnest, though the earnestness was after a pattern different from anything known to Colin; and, before the youth perceived what was going to happen, he found himself in the curate's study, placed on a kind of moral platform, as the emblem of Doubt and that pious unbelief which is the favourite of modern theology. Now, to tell the truth, Colin, though it may lower him in the opinion of many readers of his history, was not by nature given to doubting. He had, to be sure, followed the fashion of the time enough to be aware of a wonderful amount of unsettled questions, and questions which it did not appear possible ever to settle. But somehow these elements of scepticism did not give him much trouble. His heart was full of natural piety, and his instincts all fresh and strong as a child's. He could not help believing, any more than he could help breathing, his nature being such; and he was half-amused

and half-irritated by the position in which he found himself, notwithstanding the curate's respect for the ideal sceptic, whom he had thus pounced upon. The commonplace character of Colin's mind was such, that he was very glad when his new friend relaxed into gossip, and asked him who was expected at the Hall for Christmas; to which the tutor answered by such names as he had heard in the ladies' talk, and remembered with friendliness or with jealousy, according to the feeling with which Miss Matty pronounced them—which was Colin's only guide amid this crowd of the unknown.

"I wonder if it is to be a match," said the curate, who, recovering from his dread concerning the possible habits of his Scotch guest, had taken heart to share his scholarly potations of beer with his new friend. "It was said Lady Frankland did not like it, but I never believed that. After all, it was such a natural arrangement. I wonder if it is to be a match?"

"Is what to be a match?" said Colin, who all at once felt his heart stand still and grow cold, though he sat by the cheerful fire which threw its light even into the dark garden outside. "I have heard nothing about any match," he added, with a little effort. It dawned upon him instantly what it must be, and his impulse was to rush out of the house or do something rash and sudden that would prevent him from hearing it said in words.

"Between Henry Frankland and his cousin," said the calm curate; "they looked as if they were perfectly devoted to each other at one time. That has died off, for she is rather a flirt, I fear; but all the people hereabouts had made up their minds on the subject. It would be a very suitable match on the whole. But why do you get up? you are not going away?"

"Yes; I have something to do when I go home," said Colin, "something to prepare," which he said out of habit, thinking of his old work, at home, without remembering what he was saying or whether it meant anything. The curate put down the

poker which he had lifted to poke the fire, and looked at Colin with a touch of envy.

"Ah! something literary, I suppose?" said the young priest, and went with his new friend to the door, thinking how lucky he was, at his age, to have a literary connexion; a thought very natural to a young priest in a country curacy with a very small endowment. The curate wrote verses, as Colin himself did, though on very different subjects, and took some of them out of his desk and looked at them, after he had shut the door, with affectionate eyes, and a half intention of asking the tutor what was the best way to get admission to the magazines; and on the whole he was pleased with what he had seen of the young Scotchman, though he was so ignorant of church matters; an opinion which Colin perfectly reciprocated, with a more distinct sentiment of compassion for the English curate, who knew about as much of Scotland as if it had lain in the South Seas.

Meanwhile Colin walked home to Wodensbourne with fire and passion in his heart. "It would be a very suitable match on the whole," he kept saying to himself, and then tried to take a little comfort from Matty's sweet laughter over "Poor Harry!" Poor Harry was rich and fortunate, and independent, and Colin was only the tutor; were these two to meet this Christmas time and contend over again on this new ground? He went along past the black trees as if he were walking for a wager; but, quick as he walked, a dog-cart dashed past him with lighted lamps gleaming up the avenue. When he reached the Hall-door, one of the servants was disappearing up stairs with a portmanteau, and a heap of coats and wrappers lay in the Hall.

"Mr. Harry just come, sir—a week sooner than was expected," said the butler, who was an old servant and shared in the joys of the family. Colin went to his room without a word, and shut himself up there with feelings which he could not have explained

to any one. He had not seen Harry Frankland since they were both boys; but he had never got over the youthful sense of rivalry and opposition which had sent him skimming over the waters of the Holy Loch to save the boy who was his born rival and antagonist. Was this the day of their encounter and conflict which had come at last?

CHAPTER XVI.

HARRY FRANKLAND'S return made a great difference to the tutor, between whom and the heir of the house there existed that vague sense of jealousy and rivalship which was embittered on the part of young Frankland by a certain consciousness of obligation. He was a good-natured fellow enough, and above the meanness of treating unkindly anybody who was in a dependent position; but the circumstances were awkward, and he did not know how to comport himself towards the stranger. "The fellow looks like a gentleman," he said privately in confidence to his mother; "if I had never seen him before we might have got on, you know; but it's a horrible nuisance to feel that you're obliged to a fellow in that kind of position—neither your equal, you know, nor your inferior, nor—. What on earth induced the governor to have him here? If it hadn't been for these cheap Scotch universities and stuff, he'd have been a ploughman that one could have given ten pounds to and been done with him. It's a confounded nuisance having him here."

"Hush, Harry," said Lady Frankland. "He is very nice and very gentlemanly, I think. He used to be very amusing before you came home. Papa, you know, is not entertaining after dinner; and really Mr. Campbell was quite an acquisition, especially to Matty, who can't live without a slave," said the lady of the house, with an indulgent, matronly smile.

"Oh, confound it, why did the governor have him here?" cried the discontented heir. "As for Matty, it appears to me she had better begin to think of doing without slaves," he said

moodily, with a cloud on his face; a speech which made his mother look up with a quick movement of anxiety, though she still smiled.

"I can't make out either you or Matty," said Lady Frankland. "I wish you would be either off or on. With such an appearance of indifference as you show to each other—"

"Oh, indifference, by Jove!" said Harry, breaking in upon his mother's words; and the young man gave a short whistle, and, jumping up abruptly, went off without waiting for any more. Lady Frankland was not in the habit of disturbing herself about things in general. She looked after her son with a serious look, which, however, lasted but a moment. Then she returned immediately to her placidity and her needlework. "I daresay it will come all right," she said to herself, with serene philosophy, which perhaps accounted for the absence of wrinkles in her comely, middle-aged countenance. Harry, on the contrary, went off in anything but a serene state of mind. It was a foggy day, and the clouds lay very low and heavy over the fen-country, where there was nothing to relieve the dulness of nature. And it was afternoon —the very time of the day when all hopes and attempts at clearing up are over—and dinner was still too far off to throw its genial glow upon the dusky house. There had been nothing going on for a day or two at Wodensbourne. Harry was before his time, and the expected guests had not yet arrived, and the weather was as troublesome and hindersome of every kind of recreation as weather could possibly be. Young Frankland went out in a little fit of impatience, and was met at the hall-door by a mouthful of dense white steaming air, through which even the jovial trees of holly, all glowing with Christmas berries, loomed like two prickly ghosts. He uttered an exclamation of disgust as he stood on the broad stone steps, not quite sure what to do with himself—whether to face the chill misery of the air outside, or to hunt up Matty and Charley, and betake himself to the

billiard-room within. But then the tutor—confound the fellow! Just at that moment Harry Frankland heard a laugh, a provoking little peal of silver bells. He had an odd sort of affection —half love, half dislike—for his cousin. But of all Matty's charms, there was none which so tantalized and bewitched him as this laugh, which was generally acknowledged to be charming. "Much there is to laugh about, by Jove!" he muttered to himself, with an angry flush; but he grew grimly furious when he heard her voice.

"You won't give in," said Matty; "the Scotch never will, I know; you are all so dreadfully argumentative and quarrelsome. But you are beaten, though you won't acknowledge it; you know you are. I like talking to you," continued the little witch, dropping her voice a little, "because—hush! I thought I heard some one calling me from the house."

"Because why?" said Colin. They were a good way off, behind one of those great holly trees; but young Frankland, with his quickened ears, discerned in an instant the softness, the tender admiration, the music of the tutor's voice. "By Jove!" said the heir to himself; and then he shouted out, "Matty, look here! come here!" in tones as different from those of Colin as discord is from harmony. It did not occur to him that Miss Matty's ear, being perfectly cool and unexcited, was quite able to discriminate between the two voices which thus claimed her regard.

"What do you want?" said Matty. "Don't stand there in the fog like a ghost; if you have anything to say, come here. I am taking my constitutional; one's first duty is the care of one's health," said the wicked little creature, with her ring of laughter; and she turned back again under his very eyes along the terrace without looking at him again. As for Harry Frankland, the words which escaped from his excited lips were not adapted for publication. If he had been a little

less angry he would have joined them, and so made an end of the tutor; but, being furious, and not understanding anything about it, he burst for a moment into profane language, and then went off to the stables, where all the people had a bad time of it until the dressing-bell rang.

"What a savage he is," said Matty, confidentially. "That is the bore of cousins; they can't bear to see one happy, and yet they won't take the trouble of making themselves agreeable. How nice it used to be down at Kilchurn *that* summer—you remember? And what quantities of poetry you used to write. I suppose Wodensbourne is not favourable to poetry? You have never shown me anything since you came here."

"Poetry is only for one's youth," said Colin; "that is, if you dignify my verses with the name—for one's extreme youth, when one believes in everything that is impossible; and for Kilchurn, and the Lady's Glen, and the Holy Loch," said the youth, after a pause, with a fervour which disconcerted Matty. "*That* summer was not summer, but a bit of paradise—and life is real at Wodensbourne."

"I wish you would not speak in riddles," said Miss Matty, who was in the humour to have a little more of this inferred worship. "I should have thought life was a great deal more real at Ramore than here. Here we have luxuries and things—and—and—and books and—." She meant to have implied that the homely life was hard, and to have delicately intimated to Colin the advantage of living under the roof of Sir Thomas Frankland; but, catching his eye at the outset of her sentence, Matty had suddenly perceived her mistake, and broke down in a way most unusual to her. As she floundered, the young man looked at her with a full unhesitating gaze, and an incomprehensible smile.

"Pardon me," he said—he had scarcely ever attempted before to take the superiority out of her hands, little trifler and fine

lady as she was—he had been quite content to lay himself down in the dust and suffer her to march over him in airy triumph. But, while she was only a little tricksy coquette, taking from his imagination all her higher charms, Colin was a true man, a man full of young genius, and faculties a world beyond anything known to Matty; and, when he was roused for the moment, it was so easy for him to confound her paltry pretensions. "Pardon me," he said, with the smile which piqued her, which she did not understand; "I think you mistake. At Ramore I was a poor farmer's son, but we had other things to think of than the difference between wealth and poverty. At Ramore we think nothing impossible; but here—" said Colin, looking round him with a mixture of contempt and admiration, which Matty could not comprehend. "That, you perceive, was the age of poetry, the age of romance, the golden age," said the young man, with a smile. "The true knight required nothing but his sword, and was more than a match for all kinds of ugly kings and wicked enchanters; but Wodensbourne is prose, hard prose—fine English if you like, and much to be applauded for its style," the tutor ran on, delivering himself up to his fancy. "Not Miltonian, to be sure; more like Macaulay—fine vigorous English, not destitute of appropriate ornament; but still prose, plain prose, Miss Frankland—only prose!"

"It appears to me that you are cross, Mr. Campbell," said Matty, with a little spite; for her young vassal showed signs of enfranchisement when he called her by her name. "You like your rainy loch better than anything else in the world; and you are sorry," said the siren, dropping her voice, "you are even so unkind as to be sorry that you have come here?"

"Sometimes, yes," said Colin, suddenly clouding over. "It is true."

"Always," said Matty; "though you cannot deny that we freed you from the delightful duty of listening to Sir Thomas

after dinner," she went on, with a laugh. "Dear old uncle, why does he snore? So you are really sorry you came? I do so wish you would tell me why. Wodensbourne, at least, is better than Ardmartin," said Miss Matty, with a look of pique. She was rather relieved and yet horribly disappointed at the thought that Colin might perhaps be coming to his senses, in so far as she herself was concerned. It would save her a good deal of embarrassment, it was true, but she was intent upon preventing it all the same.

"I will tell' you why I am sorry, if you will tell me why I ought to be glad," said Colin, who was wise enough, for once, to see that he had the best of the argument.

"Oh, I don't know," said Matty; "if you don't see yourself —if you don't care about the advantages—if you don't mind living in the same—I mean, if you don't see the good—"

"I don't see any good," said Colin, with suppressed passion, "except one which, if I stated it plainly, you would not permit me to name. I see no advantages that I can venture to put in words. On the other hand, Wodensbourne has taught me a great deal. This fine perspicuous English prose points an argument a great deal better than all the Highland rhymings in existence," said the young man, bitterly; "I'll give you a professional example, as I'm a tutor. At the Holy Loch we conjugate all our verbs affirmatively, interrogatively. Charley and I are getting them up in the negative form here, and it's hard work," said Charley's tutor. He broke off with a laugh which sounded strange and harsh, an unusual effect, to his companion's ear.

"Affirmatively? Interrogatively?" said Miss Matty, with a pretty puzzled look; "I hate long words. How do you suppose I can know what you mean? It is such a long time since I learnt my verbs—and then one always hated them so. Look here, what a lovely holly-leaf! *Il m'aime, il ne m'aime pas?*"

said Miss Matty, pricking her fingers on the verdant spikes and casting a glance at Colin. When their eyes met they both laughed, and blushed a little in their several ways—that is to say, Miss Matty's sweet complexion grew a little, a very little, brighter for one moment, or Colin at least thought it did; whereas the blood flushed all over his face, and went dancing back like so many streams of new life and joy to exhilarate his foolish youthful heart.

"By the bye, I wonder if that foolish Harry came from my aunt; perhaps she wants me," said Miss Matty, who had gone as far as she meant to go. "Besides, the fog gets heavier; though, to be sure, I have seen it twenty times worse at Kilchurn. Perhaps it is the fog and the rain that makes it poetical there? I prefer reality, if that means a little sunshine, or even the fire in my lady's dressing-room," she cried, with a shiver. "Go indoors and write me some pretty verses: it is the only thing you can do after being such a savage. *Au revoir*—there are no half-partings in English; and it's so ridiculous to say good-bye for an hour or two," said Miss Matty. She made him a little mock curtsey as she went away, to which, out of the fulness of her grace, the little witch added a smile and a pretty wave of her hand as she disappeared round the corner of the great holly, which were meant to leave Colin in a state of ecstasy. He stayed on the foggy terrace a long time after she had left him, but the young man's thoughts were not ecstatic. So long as she was present, so long as the strongest spell of natural magic occupied his eyes in watching and his ears in listening to her, he was still carried along and kept up by the witchery of young love. But in the intervals when her presence was withdrawn, matters grew to be rather serious with Colin. He was not like a love-sick girl, able to exist upon these occasional sweetnesses; he was a man, and required something more to satisfy his mind than the tantalizing enchantments and dis-

appointments of this intercourse, which was fascinating enough in its way, but had no substance or reality in it. He had spoken truly—it had been entire romance, sweet as a morning dream at the Holy Loch. There the two young creatures, wandering by the glens and streams, were the ideal youth and maiden entering upon their natural inheritance of beauty and love and mutual admiration; and at homely Ramore, where the world to which Matty belonged was utterly unknown, it was not difficult either for Colin himself, or for those around him, to believe that—with his endowments, his talents, and genius—he could do anything, or win any woman. Wodensbourne was a most sobering, disenchanting reality after this wonderful delusion. The Franklands were all so kind to the young tutor, and their sense of obligation towards him made his position so much better than any other tutor's of his pretensions could have been, that the lesson came with all the more overwhelming force upon his awakening faculties. The morning and its dreams were gliding away—or, at least, Colin thought so; and this clear daylight, which began to come in, dissipating all the magical effects of sunshine and mist and dew, had to be faced as he best could. He was not a young prince, independent of ordinary requirements; he was truly a poor man's son, and possessed by an ideal of life and labour such as has inspired many a young Scotchman. He wanted not only to get on in the world, to acquire an income and marry Matty, but also to be good for something in his generation. If the course of true love had been quite smooth with him, if Matty had been his natural mate, Colin could not have contented himself with that personal felicity. He was doubtful of all his surroundings, like most young men of his period—doubtful what to do and how to do it—more than doubtful of all the local ways and fashions of the profession to which he had been trained. But underneath this uncertainty lay something of which Colin had no doubt. He

had not been brought into the world without an object; he did not mean to leave it without leaving some mark that he had been here. To get through life easily and secure as much pleasure as possible by the way was not the theory of existence known at Ramore. *There* it was understood to be a man's, a son's duty to better his position, to make his way upwards in the world; and this philosophy of life had been enlarged and elevated in the poetic soul of Colin's mother. He had something to do in his own country, in his own generation. This was the master-idea of the young man's mind.

But how it was to be reconciled with this aimless, dependent life in the rich English household—with this rivalry, which could never come to anything, with Sir Thomas Frankland's heir—with this vain love, which, it began to be apparent to Colin, must, like the rivalry, end in nothing—it was hard to see. He remained on the terrace for about an hour, walking up and down in the fog. All that he could see before him were some indistinct outlines of trees, looking black through the steaming white air, and, behind, the great ghost of the house, with its long front and wings receding into the mist—the great, wealthy, stranger house, to which he and his life had so little relationship. Many were the thoughts in Colin's mind during this hour; and they were far from satisfactory. Even the object of his love began to be clouded over with fogs, which looked very different, breathing over those low, rich, English levels, from the fairy mists of the Lady's Glen. He began to perceive dimly that his devotion was a toy and plaything to this little woman of the world. He began to perceive what an amount of love would be necessary to make such a creature as Matty place herself consciously by the side of such a man as himself. Love! —and as yet all that he could say certainly of Matty was that she liked a little love-making, and had afforded him a great many facilities for that agreeable but unproductive occupation.

Colin's heart lost itself in an uncertainty darker than the fog. His own position galled him profoundly. He was Charley's tutor. They were all very kind to him; but, supposing he were to ask the child of the house to descend from her eminence and be his wife—not even his wife, indeed, but his betrothed; to wait years and years for him until he should be able to claim her—what would everybody think of him? Colin's heart beat against his breast in loud throbs of wounded love and pride. At Wodensbourne everything seemed impossible. He had not the heart to go away and end abruptly his first love and all his dreams; and how could he stay to consume his heart and his life? How go back to the old existence, which would now be so much harder? How begin anew and try another life apart from all his training and traditions, for the sake of that wildest of incredible hopes? Colin had lived for some time in this state of struggle and argument with himself, and it was only Matty's presence which at times delivered him from it. Now, as before, he took refuge in the thought that he could not immediately free himself; that, having accepted his position as Charley's tutor, he could not relinquish it immediately; that honour bound him to remain for the winter at least. When he had come, for the fiftieth time, to this conclusion, he went indoors, and upstairs to his room. It was a good way up, but yet it was more luxurious than anything in Ramore, and on the table there were some flowers which she had given him the night before. Poor Colin! after his serious reflections he owed himself a little holiday. It was an odd enough conclusion, certainly, to his thoughts, but he had an hour to himself and his writing-desk was open on the table, and involuntarily he bethought himself of Miss Matty's parting words. The end of it was that he occupied his hour writing and re-writing and polishing into smooth couplets the pretty verses which that young lady had asked for. Colin's verses were as follows; from which it will

be seen that, though he had a great deal of poetical sentiment, he was right in refusing to consider himself a poet :—

" In English speech, my lady said,
There are no sweet half-partings made—
Words half regret, half joy, that tell
We meet again and all is well.
Ah, not for sunny hours or days
Its grave 'Farewell' our England says ;
Nor for a moment's absence, true,
Utters its prayer, 'God be with you.'
Other the thoughts that Love may reach,
In the grave tones of English speech ;
Deeper than Fancy's passing breath,
The blessing stands for life or death.
If Heaven in wrath should rule it so,
If earth were capable of woe
So bitter as that this might be
The last dear word 'twixt thee and me—
Thus Love in English speech, above
All lighter thoughts, breathes : 'Farewell, Love ;
For hours or ages if we part,
God be with thee, where'er thou art.
To no less hands than His alone
I trust thy soul out of mine own.'
Thus speaks the love that, grave and strong,
Can master death, neglect, and wrong,
Yet ne'er can learn, long as it lives,
To limit the full soul it gives,
Or cheat the parting of its pain
With light words 'Till we meet again.'
Ah, no, while on a moment's breath
Love holds the poise 'twixt life and death,
He cannot leave who loves thee, sweet,
With light postponement 'Till we meet ;'
But rather prays, 'Whate'er may be
My life or death, God be with *thee !*
Though one brief hour my course may tell,
Ever and ever Fare *thou* well.'"

Probably the readers of this history will think that Colin deserved his fate.

He gave them to her in the evening, when he found her alone in the drawing-room—alone, at least, in so far that Lady Frankland was nodding over the newspaper, and taking no notice of Miss Matty's proceedings. "Oh, thank you; how nice of you!" cried the young lady; but she crumpled the little billet in her hand, and put it, not into her bosom as young ladies do in novels, but into her pocket, glancing at the door as she did so. "I do believe you are right in saying that there is nothing but prose here," said Matty. "I can't read it just now. It would only make them laugh, you know;" and she went away forthwith to the other end of the room, and began to occupy herself in arranging some music. She was thus employed when Harry came in, looking black enough. Colin was left to himself all that evening. He had, moreover, the gratification of witnessing all the privileges once accorded to himself given to his rival. Even in matters less urgent than love, it is disenchanting to see the same attentions lavished on another of which one has imagined one's self the only possessor. It was in vain that Colin attempted a grim smile to himself at this transference of Matty's wiles and witcheries. The lively table-talk—more lively than it could be with him, for the two knew all each other's friends and occupations; the little services about the tea-table which he himself had so often rendered to Matty, but which her cousin could render with a freedom impossible to Colin; the pleased, amused looks of the elders, who evidently imagined matters to be going on as they wished;—would have been enough of themselves to drive the unfortunate youth half wild as he sat in the background and witnessed it all. But, as Colin's evil genius would have it, the curate was that evening dining at Wodensbourne. And, in pursuance of his benevolent intention of cultivating and influencing the young Scotchman, this excellent ecclesiastic devoted himself to Colin. He asked a great many questions about Scotland and

the Sabbath question, and the immoral habits of the peasantry, to which the catechumen replied with varying temper, sometimes giving wild answers, quite wide of the mark, as he applied his jealous ear to hear rather the conversation going on at a little distance than the interrogatory addressed to himself. Most people have experienced something of the difficulty of keeping up an indifferent conversation while watching and straining to catch such scraps as may be audible of something more interesting going on close by; but the difficulty was aggravated in Colin's case by the fact that his own private interlocutor was doing everything in his power to exasperate him in a well-meaning and friendly way, and that the words which fell on his ear close at hand were scarcely less irritating than the half-heard words, the but too distinctly seen combinations at the other end of the room, where Matty was making tea, with her cousin hanging over her chair. After he had borne it as long as he could, Colin turned to bay.

"Scotland is not in the South Seas," said the young Scotchman; "a day's journey any time will take you there. As for our Universities, they are not rich like yours, but they have been heard of from time to time," said Colin, with indignation. His eyes had caught fire from long provocation, and they were fixed at this moment upon Matty, who was showing her cousin something which she half drew out of her pocket under cover of her handkerchief. Was it his foolish offering that the two were about to laugh over? In the bitterness of the moment, he could have taken the most summary vengeance on the irreproachable young clergyman. "We don't tattoo ourselves now-a-days, and no Englishman has been eaten in my district within the memory of man," said the young savage, who looked quite inclined to swallow somebody, though it was doubtful who was the immediate object of the passion which played in his brown eyes. Perhaps Colin had never been so much excited in his life.

"I beg your pardon," said the wondering curate. "I tire you, I fear—" and he followed Colin's eyes, after his first movement of offence was over, and perhaps comprehended the mystery, for the curate himself had been in his day the subject of experiments. "They seem to have come to a very good understanding, these two," he said, with a gentle clerical leaning towards inevitable gossip. "I told you how it was likely to be. I wish you would come to the vicarage oftener," continued the young priest. "If Frankland and you don't get on—"

"Why should not we get on?" said Colin, who was half mad with excitement; he had just seen some paper, wonderfully like his own verses, handed from one to another of the pair who were so mutually engrossed—and, if he could have tossed the curate or anybody else who might happen to be at hand out of window, it would have been a relief to his feelings. "He and I are in very different circumstances," said the young man, with his eyes aflame. "I am not aware that it is of the least importance to any one whether we get on or not. You forget that I am only the tutor." It occurred to him, as he spoke, that he had said the same words to Matty at Ardmartin, and how they had laughed together over his position. It was not any laughing matter now; and to see the two heads bending over that bit of paper was more than he could bear.

"I wish you would come oftener to the parsonage," said the benevolent curate. "I might be—we might be—of—of some use to each other. I am very much interested in your opinions. I wish I could bring you to see the beauty of all the Church's arrangements and the happiness of those—"

Here Colin rose to his feet without being aware of it, and the curate stopped speaking. He was a man of placid temper himself, and the young stranger's aspect alarmed him. Harry Frankland was coming forward with the bit of paper in his hand.

"Look here," said Frankland, instinctively turning his back on the tutor, "here's a little drawing my cousin has been making for some schools you want in the village. She says they must be looked after directly. It's only a scratch, but I think it's pretty—a woman is always shaky in her outlines, you know; but the idea ain't bad, is it? She says I am to talk to you on the subject," said the heir; and he spread out the sketch on the table and began to discuss it with the pleased curate. Harry was pleased too, in a modified way; he thought he was gratifying Matty, and he thought it was good of such a wayward little thing to think about the village children; and, finally, he thought if she had been indifferent to the young lord of the manor she would not have taken so much trouble—which were all agreeable and consolatory imaginations. As for Colin, standing up by the table, his eyes suddenly glowed and melted into a mist of sweet compunctions; he stood quite still for a moment, and then he caught the smallest possible gesture, the movement of a finger, the scarce-perceptible lifting of an eyelash, which called him to her side. When he went up to Matty he found her reading very demurely, with her book held in both her hands, and his little poem placed above the printed page. "It is charming!" said the little witch; "I could not look at it till I had got rid of Harry. It is quite delightful, and it is the greatest shame in the world not to print it; but I can't conceive how you can possibly remember the trumpery little things I say." The conclusion was, that sweeter dreams than usual visited Colin's sleep that night. Miss Matty had not yet done with her interesting victim.

CHAPTER XVII.

Colin found a letter on the breakfast-table next morning, which gave a new development to his mental struggle. It was from the Professor in Glasgow in whose class he had won his greatest laurels. He was not a correspondent nor even a friend of Colin's, and the effect of his letter was increased accordingly. "One of our exhibitions to Balliol is to be competed for immediately after Christmas," wrote the Professor. "I am very anxious that you should be a candidate. From all I have seen of you, I am inclined to augur a brilliant career for your talents if they are fully cultivated; and for the credit of our University, as well as for your own sake, I should be glad to see you the holder of this scholarship. Macdonald, your old rival, is a very satisfactory scholar, and has unbounded perseverance and steadiness—doggedness, I might almost say; but he is not the kind of man—I speak to you frankly—to do us any credit at Oxford, nor indeed to do himself any particular advantage. His is the commonly received type of Scotch intelligence—hard, keen, and unsympathetic—a form as little true to the character of the nation as conventional types usually are. I don't want, to speak the truth, to send him to my old college as a specimen of what we can produce here. It would be much more satisfactory to myself to send you, and I think you could make better use of the opportunities thus opened to you. Lauderdale informs me that Sir Thomas Frankland is an old friend and one under obligations to you or your family: probably, in the circumstances, he would not object to release you from your engagement. The matter is

so important, that I don't think you should allow any false delicacy in respect to your present occupation to deter you from attending to your own interests. You are now just at the age to benefit in the highest degree by such an opportunity of prosecuting your studies."

This was the letter which woke all the slumbering forces of Colin's mind to renew the struggle against his heart and his fancy which he had already waged unsuccessfully. He was not of much use to Charley for that day at least; their conjugations, negative or affirmative, made but small progress, and the sharp-witted boy gave his tutor credit for being occupied with Matty, and scorned him accordingly—of which fact the young man was fortunately quite unaware. When it became possible for Colin to speak to Sir Thomas on the subject, he had again lost himself in a maze of conflicting inclinations. Should he leave this false position, and betake himself again, in improved and altered circumstances, to the business of his life? But Colin saw very clearly that to leave his present position was to leave Matty—to relinquish his first dream; to give up the illusion which, notwithstanding all its drawbacks, had made life lovely to him for the past year at least. Already he had so far recovered his senses as to feel that, if he left her now, he left her for ever, and that no new tie could be woven between his humble fortunes and those of the little siren of Wodensbourne. Knowing this, yet all the while subject to her witcheries—hearing the song that lured him on—how was he to take a strenuous resolution, and leap back into the disenchanted existence, full of duty but deprived of delights, which awaited him in his proper sphere? He had gone out to the terrace again in the afternoon to argue it out with himself, when he encountered Sir Thomas, who had a cold, and was taking his constitutional discreetly for his health's sake, not without an eye to the garden in which Lady Frankland intended sundry alterations which were not quite satisfactory to

her lord. "Of course I don't mean to interfere with my lady's fancies," said the baronet, who was pleased to find some one to whom he could confide his griefs; "a flower-garden is a woman's department, certainly, if anything is; but I won't have this terrace disturbed. It used to be my mother's favourite walk," said Sir Thomas. The good man went on, a little moved by this particular recollection, meditating his grievance. Sir Thomas had got very nearly to the other end of that table-land of existence which lies between the ascent and the descent—that interval in which the suns burn hottest, the winds blow coldest, but upon which, when it is fair weather, the best part of life may be spent. By right of his extended prospect, he was naturally a little contemptuous of those griefs and struggles of youth which cloud over the ascending way. Had any one told him of the real conflict which was going on in Colin's mind, the excellent middle-aged man would but have laughed at the boy's folly—a laughter softened yet confirmed by the recollection of similar clouds in his own experience which had long dispersed into thin air. He was a little serious at the present moment, about my lady's caprice, which aimed at altering the smooth stretch of lawn to which his eyes had been accustomed for years—and turned to listen to Colin, when the young man addressed him, with a slight air of impatience, not knowing anything of importance which the youth could have to say.

"I should be glad to know," said Colin, with hesitation, "how long you think Charley will want my services. Lady Frankland was speaking the other day of the improvement in his health—"

"Yes," said the baronet, brightening up a little, for his invalid boy was his favourite. "We are greatly obliged to you, Campbell. Charley has brightened and improved amazingly since you came here."

This was an embarrassing way of receiving Colin's attempt at disengaging himself from Charley. The youth hesitated and

ammered, and could not well make up his mind what to say next. In his perplexity he took out the letter which had stimulated him to this attempt. Sir Thomas, who was still a little impatient, took it out of his hands and read it. The baronet whistled under his breath with puzzled astonishment as he read. "What does it mean?" said Sir Thomas. "You declined to go to Oxford under my auspices, and now here is something about a scholarship and a competition. You want to go to the University after all—but why then reject my proposal when I made it?" said Colin's patron, who thought his *protégé* had chosen a most unlucky moment for changing his mind.

"I beg your pardon," said Colin, "but I could not accept your offer at any time. I could not accept such a favour from any man; and I know no claim I have upon you to warrant—"

"Oh, stuff!" said Sir Thomas; "I know very well what are the obligations I am under to you, Campbell. You saved my son Harry's life—we are all very sensible of your claims. I should certainly have expected you to help Harry as far as was possible—for he is like myself—he is more in the way of cricket and boating, and a day with the hounds when he can get it, than Greek; but I should have felt real pleasure," said the baronet blandly, "in helping so deserving a young man, and one to whom we all feel so much indebted—"

"Thank you," said Colin, who at that moment would have felt real pleasure in punching the head, or maltreating the person of the heir of Wodensbourne—"I suppose we have all some pride in one way or another. I am obliged to you, Sir Thomas, but I could not accept such a favour from you; whereas, a prize won at my own university," said the young man, with a little elevation, "is no discredit, but—

"Discredit!" said Sir Thomas; "you must have a very strange idea of me, Mr. Campbell, if you imagine it discreditable to accept a kindness at my hands."

"I beg your pardon," again said Colin, who was at his wit's end; "I did not mean to say anything uncivil; but I am Scotch. I dislike receiving favours. I prefer—"

Sir Thomas rubbed his hands. The apology of nationality went a long way with him, and restored his temper. "Yes, yes; I understand," he said, with good-humoured superiority: "you prefer conferring favours—you like to keep the upper hand. I know a great deal of you Scotchmen; I flatter myself I understand your national character. I should like to know now," said the baronet, confidentially, "if you are set upon becoming a Scotch minister, as you once told me, what good it will do you going to Oxford? Supposing you were to distinguish yourself, which I think very possible; supposing you were to take a—a second-class, or even a first-class, for example, what would be the good? The reputation and the—the *prestige* and that sort of thing would be altogether lost in Scotland. All the upper classes you know have gone from the old Kirk, and you would not please the peasants a bit better for that—indeed, the idea of an Oxford first-class man spending his life preaching to a set of peasants is absurd," said Sir Thomas. "I know more about Scotland than most men: I paid a great deal of attention to that Kirk question. If you go to Oxford I shall expect you to change your mind about your profession. If you don't take to something more ambitious, at least you'll go in for the Church."

"I have always intended so," said Colin, with his grand air, ignoring the baronet's meaning. "To preach, if it is only to peasants, is more worth a man's while than reading prayers for ever, like your curate here. I am only Scotch; I know no better," said Colin. "We want changes in Scotland, it is true; but it is as good to work for Scotland as for England—better for me—and I should not grudge my first-class to the service of my native Church," said the youth, with a movement of his head which tossed his heavy brown locks from his concealed forehead.

Sir Thomas looked at him with a blank amazement, not knowing in the least what he meant. He thought the young fellow had been piqued somehow, most probably by Matty, and was in a heroical mood, which mood Colin's patron did not pretend to understand.

"Well, well," he said, with some impatience, "I suppose you will take your own way; but I must say it would seem very odd to see an Oxford first-class man in a queer little kirk in the Highlands, preaching a sermon an hour long. Of course, if you like it, that's another matter; and the Scotch certainly do seem to like preaching," said Sir Thomas, with natural wonder; "but we flattered ourselves you were comfortable here. I am sorry you want to go away."

This was taking Colin on his undefended side. The words brought colour to his cheeks and moisture to his eye. "Indeed, I don't want to go away," he said, and paused, and faltered, and grew still more deeply crimson. "I can never forget; I can never think otherwise than with—with gratitude of Wodensbourne." He was going to have said tenderness, but stopped himself in time; and even Sir Thomas, though his eyes were noway anointed with any special chrism of insight, saw the emotion in his face.

"Then don't go," said the straightforward baronet; "why should you go if you don't want to? We are all most anxious that you should stay. Indeed, it would upset my plans dreadfully if you were to leave Charley at present. He's a wonderful fellow, is Charley. He has twice as much brains as the rest of my boys, sir; and you understand him, Campbell. He is happier, he is stronger, he is even a better fellow—poor lad, when he's ill he can't be blamed for a bit of temper—since you came. Indeed, now I think it over," said Sir Thomas, "you will mortify and disappoint me very much if you go away. I quite considered you had accepted Charley's tutorship for a year

at least. My dear, here's a pretty business," he said, turning round at the sound of steps and voices, which Colin had already discerned from afar with a feeling that he was now finally vanquished, and could yield with a good grace; "here's Campbell threatening to go away."

"To go away!" said Lady Frankland. "Dear me, he can't mean it. Why, he only came the other day; and Charley, you know"—said the anxious mother; but she recollected Harry's objection to the tutor, and did not make any very warm opposition. Colin, however, was totally unconscious of the lukewarmness of the lady of the house. The little scream of dismay with which Miss Matty received the intelligence might have deluded a wiser man than he.

"Going away! I call it downright treachery," said Miss Matty. "I think it is using you very unkindly, uncle; when he knows you put such dependence on him about Charley; and when *we* know the house has been quite a different thing since Mr. Campbell came," said the little witch, with a double meaning, of which Colin, poor boy, swallowed the sweeter sense, without a moment's hesitation. *He* knew it was not the improvement in Charley's temper which had made the house different to Matty; but Lady Frankland, who was not a woman of imagination, took up seriously what seemed to be the obvious meaning of the words.

"It is quite true. I am sure we are much obliged to Mr. Campbell," she said; "Charley is quite an altered boy; and I had hoped you were liking Wodensbourne. If we could do anything to make it more agreeable to you," said Lady Frankland, graciously, remembering how Charley's "temper" was the horror of the house. "I am sure Sir Thomas would not grudge—"

"Pray do not say any more," said Colin, confused and blushing; "no house could be more—no house could be *so* agreeable to me. You are all very kind. It was only my—my own—"

What he was going to say is beyond the reach of discovery. He was interrupted by a simultaneous utterance from all the three persons present, of which Colin heard only the soft tones of Matty. "He does not mean it," she said; "he only means to alarm us. I shall not say good-bye, nor farewell either. You shall have no good wishes if you *think* of going away. False as a Campbell," said the siren under her breath, with a look which overpowered Colin. He never was quite sure what words followed from the elder people; but even Lady Frankland became fervent when she recalled what Charley had been before the advent of the tutor. "What we should do with him now, if Mr. Campbell was to leave and the house full of people, I tremble to think," said the alarmed mother. When Colin returned to the house it was with a slightly flattered sense of his own value and importance new to him—with a sense too that duty had fully acquitted and justified inclination, and that he could not at the present moment leave his post. This delicious unction he laid to his soul while it was still thrilling with the glance and with the words which Matty, in her alarm, had used to prevent her slave's escape. Whatever happened, he could not, he would not, go; better to perish with such a hope, than to thrive without it; and, after all, there was no need for perishing, and next year Oxford might still be practicable. So Colin said to himself, as he made his simple toilette for the evening, with a face which was radiant with secret sunshine, "It was only my—my own—." How had he intended to complete that sentence which the Franklands took out of his mouth? Was he going to say interest, advantage, peace? The unfinished words came to his mind involuntarily when he was alone. They kept flitting in and out, disturbing him with vague touches of uneasiness, asking to be completed. "My own—only my own," Colin said to himself as he went downstairs. He was saying over the words softly as he came to a landing, upon which there

was a great blank staircase-window reaching down to the floor, and darkly filled at this present moment with a grey waste of sky and tumbling clouds, with a wild wind visibly surging through the vacant atmosphere, and conveying almost to the eye in palpable vision the same demonstration of its presence as it did to the ear. "My own—only my own. I wonder what you mean; the words sound quite sentimental," said Miss Matty, suddenly appearing at Colin's side, with a light in her hand. The young man was moved strangely; he could not tell why. "I meant my own life, I believe," he said with a sudden impulse, unawares; "only my own life," and went down the next flight of stairs before the young lady, not knowing what he was about. When he came to himself, and stood back, blushing with hot shame, to let her pass, the words came back in a dreary whirl, as if the wind had taken them up and tossed them at him, out of that wild windowful of night. His life—only his life; was that what he had put in comparison with Charley's temper and Matty's vanity, and given up with enthusiasm? Something chill, like a sudden cold current through his veins, ran to Colin's heart for a moment. Next minute he was in the room, where bright lights, and lively talk, and all the superficial cordiality of prosperity and good-humour filled the atmosphere round him. Whatever the stake had been, the cast was over and the decision made.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE Christmas guests began to arrive at Wodensbourne on the same day that Colin concluded this sacrifice; and for some days the tutor had scant measure of that society which had lured him to the relinquishment even of his "life." When the house was full of people, Matty found a thousand occupations in which of necessity Colin had no share,—not to say that the young lady felt it a matter of prudence, after she had accepted his sacrifice, to be as little as possible in his society. It was pleasant enough to feel her power, and to know that for her invaluable smile the boy had bartered his independent career; but to put him in the way of claiming any reward for his offering would have been exceedingly inconvenient to Matty. He paid the full penalty accordingly for at least a week thereafter, and had abundant opportunity of counting the cost and seeing what he had done. It was not exhilarating to spend the mornings with Charley, to answer his sharp questions, to satisfy his acute but superficial mind—in which curiosity was everything, and thought scarcely existed—and to feel that for this he had given up all that was individual in his life. He had left his own University, he had given up the chance of going to Oxford, he had separated himself from his companions and given up his occupations—all for the pleasure of teaching Charley, of standing in a corner of the Wodensbourne drawing-room, and feeling acutely through every fibre of his sensitive Scotch frame that he was the tutor, and stood accordingly in about as much relationship to the society in which he found himself as if he had been a New Zealand chief. Colin, however, had made up his mind, and there was nothing for it now

but to consent and accept his fate. But it was astonishing how different things looked from that corner of the drawing-room—unspeakably different from the aspect they bore when Colin himself was the only stranger present, and even different from the state of affairs after Harry came home, when he had been thrown into the shade, and a fever of excitement and jealousy had taken possession of Colin's breast. He was very young, and was not used to society. When Matty addressed to her cousin the same witcheries which she had expended on her worshipper, the young man was profoundly wretched and jealous beyond description. But when he saw her use the same wiles with others, lavishing freely the smiles which had been so precious to his deluded fancy upon one and another, a painful wonder seized the mind of Colin. To stand in that corner possessed by one object was to be behind the scenes. Colin was mortal; he had made a great sacrifice, and he was glad to have made it; but he could not forget it, nor stand at his ease, accepting the civilities that might be offered to him as to another. At first he expected the equivalent which he imagined had been pledged to him, and when he found out his mistake in that, he discovered also how impossible it was to refrain from a feeling of injury, a jealous consciousness of inadequate appreciation. He himself knew, if nobody else did, the price at which he had bought those siren smiles, and under these circumstances to stand by and see them bestowed upon others, was an experience which conveyed wonderful insight to Colin's inexperienced eyes. If Miss Matty saw him at all, she saw him in the corner, and gave him a nod and a smile in passing, which she thought quite enough to keep him happy for the time being. For, unluckily, the professors of this art of fascination, both male and female, are apt now and then to deceive themselves as to the extent of their own powers. While Matty was so perfectly easy in her mind about the tall figure in the corner, he, for his part, was watching her with feelings which it would

be very hard to describe. His very admiration, the sincerity of his love, intensified the smouldering germs of disappointment and disgust of which he became uneasily conscious as he stood and watched. He saw by glimpses "the very heart of the machine" from that unnoticed observatory. He saw how she distributed and divided her bright looks, her playful talk; he perceived how she exerted herself to be more and more charming if any victim proved refractory, and was slow to yield. Had Colin been kept more perfectly in hand himself, had she devoted a little more time, a little more pains to him, it is probable that the sweet flattery would have prevailed, and that he might have forgiven her the too great readiness she showed to please others. But, as it was, the glamour died out of Colin's eyes ray by ray, and bitter in the consciousness of all he had sacrificed, he began to find out how little the reward, even could he have obtained it, was worth the price. The process was slow, but it went on night by night—and night by night, as the disenchantment progressed, Colin became more and more unhappy. It was wretched to see the sweet illusion which had made life so beautiful disappearing under his very eyes, and to feel that the enchantment, which had to him been so irresistible, was a conscious and studied art, which could be used just when the possessor pleased, with as much coolness as if it had bean the art of embroidery or any other feminine handicraft. A wise spectator might, and probably would, have said, that to learn this lesson was the best thing possible for Colin; but that did not make it the less cruel, the less bitter. In his corner the young man gradually drew nearer and nearer to the fierce misanthropy of outraged youth, that misanthropy which is as warm a protest against common worldliness as the first enthusiasm. But his heart was not yet released, though his eyes were becoming enlightened; reason works slowly against love—and bitter at the bottom of all lay the sense of the sacrifice, which was only his life.

A few days after Christmas, a party of the young men staying at Wodensbourne were bound upon a boating expedition, to decide some bet which bore remotely upon one of the greatest events of the University year—the great match between Oxford and Cambridge. Harry Frankland, who was an Oxford man, though the spires of Cambridge might almost have been visible from his father's park, had there been any eminence high enough to afford a view, was deeply interested on the side of his own University; and some unfortunate youths belated at Cambridge during the holidays for want of friends, or money, or some other needful adjunct of festival-keeping, were but too glad to seize the opportunity of a day's pleasure. Colin never knew how it was that he came to be asked to join the party. Though Harry's jealousy was gone, for the moment at least, there was not even a pretence of friendship between the tutor and the heir. Nor could Colin ever explain how it was that he consented to go, for scores of objections naturally presented themselves at the first proposal. He was sensitive, affronted, feeling deeply his false position, and ready to receive with suspicion any overtures of friendliness from any man possessed by a benevolent wish to be kind to the tutor. It was, however, his fate to go, and the preliminaries arranged themselves somehow. They started on a frosty bright morning, when the trees of the park were still only emerging from mists tinted red by the sunshine, a joyous, rather noisy party; they were to walk to the river, which was about six miles off, and when their business was decided, to lunch at a favourite haunt of the Cambridge undergraduates. Lady Frankland, who did not much approve of the expedition, gave them many counsels about the way. "I wish you would drive and get back by daylight," she said; "otherwise I know you will be taking *that* path across the fields."

"What path?" said some one present; "if there is one specially objectionable we will be sure to take it."

"I would not if I were you," said Miss Matty. "There is a nasty canal in the way; if you pass it after dark, some of you will certainly fall in. It would be a pity to be drowned in such a slimy, shabby way. Much better have all sorts of dog-carts and things, and drive back in time for a cup of tea."

At which speech there was a general laugh. "Matty would give her soul for a cup of tea," said her cousin. "What a precious fright you'll all be in if we're late for dinner. I ought to know all about the canal by this time. Come along. It's too cold to think of drowning," said Harry Frankland, with a filial nod of leave-taking to his mother. As for Matty, she went to the door with them to see them go off, as did some others of the ladies. Matty lifted her pretty cheek sideways and stretched out her hand into the frosty atmosphere as if to feel for rain.

"I thought I saw some drops," she said; "it would be frightful if it came on to rain now, and spoiled our chances of skating. Good morning, and, whatever you do, I beg of you don't get drowned in the canal. It would be such a shabby way of making an end of one's self," said Matty. When she looked up she caught Colin's eye, who was the last to leave the house. She was in the humour to be kind to him at that moment. "Shall I say good-bye, or farewell?" she said softly, with that confidential air which Colin, notwithstanding his new enlightenment, had no heart to resist.

"You shall say what you please," said Colin, lingering on the step beside her. The young man was in a kind of desperate mood. Perhaps he liked to show his companions that he too could have his turn.

"Good-bye—farewell," said Matty, "but then that implies shaking hands," and she gave him her pretty hand with a little laugh, making it appear to the group outside that the clownish tutor had insisted upon that unnecessary ceremony. "But whatever you please to say, I like *au revoir* best," said Miss

Matty; "it does not even suggest parting." And she waved her hand as she turned away. "Till we meet again," said the little enchantress. It might be to him especially, or it might be to all, that she made this little gesture of farewell. Anyhow, Colin followed the others with indescribable sensations. He no longer believed in her, but her presence, her looks, her words, had still mastery over him. He had walked half the way before the fumes of that leave-taking had gone out of his brain; though most part of the time he was keeping up a conversation about things in general with the stupidest of the party, who kept pertinaciously by the tutor's side.

The day went off with considerable satisfaction to all the party, and, as Colin and Frankland did not come much in contact, there was little opportunity for displaying the spirit of opposition and contradiction which existed between them. Fortunately, Colin was not at hand to hear Harry's strictures upon his method of handling the oars, nor did Frankland perceive the smile of contemptuous recollection which came upon the tutor's face as he observed how tenderly the heir of Wodensbourne stepped into the boat, keeping clear of the wet as of old. "That fellow has not a bit of science," said young Frankland; "he expects mere strength to do everything. Look how he holds his oar. It never occurs to him that he is in anything lighter than a Highland fishing cobble. What on earth, I wonder, made us bring him here?"

"Science goes a great way," said the most skilled oarsman of the party, "but I'd like to have the training of Campbell all the same. He talks of going to Balliol, and I shall write to Cox about him. What a chest the fellow has," said the admiring spectator. Meanwhile Colin had not hesitated to explain his smile.

"I smile because I recollect smiling years ago," said Colin. "See how Frankland steps into the boat. When he was a boy

he did the same. I remember it, and it amused me; for wet feet were a new idea to me in those days;" and Colin laughed outright, and the eyes of the two met. Neither knew what the other had been saying, but the spectators perceived without more words that the young men were not perfectly safe companions for each other, and took precautions, with instinctive comprehension of the case.

"Those two don't get on," said one of the party, under his breath. "It *is* hard upon a fellow, you know, to have another fellow stuck up at his side who saved his life, and that sort of thing. I shouldn't like it myself. Somebody keep an eye on Frankland —and on the Scotch fellow, too," said the impartial peace-maker. Luckily, neither of the two who were thus put under friendly surveillance was at all aware of the fact, and Colin submitted with as good a grace as possible to the constant companionship of the stupidest and best-humoured of the party, who had already bestowed his attentions and society upon the tutor. This state of things, however, did not endure after the luncheon, at which it was not possible for Colin to remain a merely humble spectator and sharer of the young men's entertainment. He had not been broken in to such duty; and, excited by exercise and the freedom round him, Colin could no more help talking than he could help the subsequent discovery made by his companions that "the Scotch fellow" was very good company. The young men spent —as was to be expected—a much longer time over their lunch than was at all necessary; and the short winter day was just over when they set out on their way home through the evening mists, which soon deepened into darkness, very faintly lighted by a few doubtful stars. Everybody declared, it is true, that there was to be a moon; indeed, it was with the distinct understanding that there was to be a moon that the party had started on foot from Wodensbourne. But the moon showed herself lamentably indifferent to the arrangements which depended on

her. She gave not the least sign of appearing anywhere in that vast, windy vault of sky, which indeed had a little light in itself, but could spare scarcely any to show the wayfarers where they were going through the dreary wintry road and between the rustling leafless hedges. When they got into the fields matters grew rather worse. It was hard to keep the path, harder still to find the stiles and steer through gaps and ditches. The high road made a round which would lead them three or four miles out of their way, and Frankland insisted upon his own perfect knowledge of the by-way by which they could reach Wodensbourne in an hour. "Mind the canal we were warned of this morning," suggested one of the party, as they paused in the dark at the corner of a black field to decide which way they should go. "Oh, confound the canal; as if I didn't know every step of the way," said young Frankland. "It's a settled principle in the female mind that one is bent upon walking into canals whenever one has an opportunity. Come along; if you're afraid, perhaps Campbell will show you the other way."

"Certainly," said Colin, without the least hesitation. "I have no wish to walk into the canal, for my part;" upon which there was a universal protest against parting company. "Come along," said one, who thrust his arm through Colin's as he spoke, but who was no longer the stupid member of the party, "we'll all take our chance together;" but he kept the tutor as far as possible from the heir of Wodensbourne. "Frankland and you don't seem to get on," said Colin's companion; "yet he's a very nice fellow when you come to know him. I suppose you must have had some misunderstanding, eh? Wasn't it you who saved his life?"

"I never saved any one's life," said Colin, a little sharply; "and we get on well enough—as well as is necessary. We have no call to see much of each other." After this they all went on through the dark as well as they could, getting into

difficulties now and then, sometimes collecting together in a bewildered group at a stile or turning, and afterwards streaming on in single file—a succession of black figures which it was impossible to identify except by their voices. Certainly they made noise enough. What with shouts from the beginning to the end of the file, what with bursts of song which came occasionally from one or another or were taken up in uproarious chorus, the profound stillness which enveloped and surrounded them was compelled to own their human presence to the ear at least. In the natural course of their progress Colin and his immediate companion had got nearly to the front, when the laughter and noise was suddenly interrupted. "I don't quite see where we are going," said Harry. "Stop a bit; I shouldn't mind going on myself, but I don't want to risk you fellows who are frightened for canals. Look here; the road ought to have gone on at this corner, but here's nothing but a hedge. Keep where you are till I look out. There's a light over there, but I can't tell what's between."

"Perhaps it's the canal," said some one behind.

"Oh, yes, of course it's the canal," said Frankland, with irritation. "You stand back till I try; if I fall in, it's my own fault, which will be a consolation to my friends," cried the angry guide. He started forward impatiently, not, however, without being closely followed by two or three, among whom was Colin.

"Don't be foolish, Frankland," said one voice in the darkness; "let us all go together—let us be cautious. I feel something like gravel under my feet. Steady, steady; feel with your foot before you put it down. Oh! good heavens, what is it?" The voice broke off abruptly; a loud splash and a cry ensued, and the young men behind saw the figures in advance of them suddenly drop and disappear. It *was* the canal, upon which they had been making unawares. Two out of the four

had only stumbled on the bank, and rose up again immediately; and as those behind, afraid to press forward, not knowing what to do, stood watching appalled, another and another figure scrambled up with difficulty, calling for help, out of the water, into which they had not, however, plunged deeply enough to peril their lives. Then there was a terrible momentary pause.

"Are we all here?" said Colin. His voice sounded like a funeral bell pealing through the darkness. He knew they were not all there. He, with his keen eyes, rendered keener by opposition and enmity, had seen beyond mistake that the first of all went down and had not risen again. The consciousness made his voice tragic as it rang through the darkness. Somebody shouted, "Yes, yes, thank God!" in reply. It was only a second, but years of life rolled up upon Colin in that moment of time—years of sweet troublous existence behind; years of fair life before. Should he let him die? It was not his fault; nobody could blame him. And what right had *he* to risk his life a second time for Harry Frankland? All that a murderer, all that a martyr could feel rushed through Colin's mind in that instant of horrible indecision. Then somebody said, "Frankland, Frankland! where is Frankland?" That voice was the touch of fate. With a strange shout, of which he was unconscious, Colin plunged into the black invisible stream. By this time the others of the party saw with unspeakable relief lights approaching, and heard through the darkness voices of men coming to their assistance. They were close by one of the locks of the canal; and it was the keeper of it, not unused to such accidents, who came hurrying to give what help was possible. His lantern and some torches which the anxious young men managed to light threw a wild illumination over the muddy, motionless stream, in which two of their number, lately as gay and light-hearted as any, were now struggling for their life. The same light flared horribly over the two motionless figures,

which, after an interval which seemed like years to the bystanders, were at length brought out of the blackness; one of them still retaining strength and consciousness to drag the other with him up the stony margin before his senses failed. They lay silent both, with pallid faces, upon the hard path; one as like death as the other, with a kind of stony, ghostly resemblance in their white insensibility, except that there was blood on the lips of one, who must have struck, the lockman said, upon some part of the lock. They were carried into the cottage, and hurried messengers sent to the nearest doctor and to Wodensbourne. Meanwhile the two lay together, pallid and motionless, nobody knowing which was living and which dead.

CHAPTER XIX.

COLIN never ascertained what were the events immediately succeeding his plunge into the canal; all he could recall dimly of that strange crisis in his life was a sense of slow motion in which he himself was passive, and of looking up at the stars in a dark-blue, frosty, winterly sky, with a vague wonder in his mind how it was that he saw them so clearly, and whether it was they or he that moved. Afterwards, when his mind became clear, it grew apparent to him that he must have opened his eyes for a moment while he was being carried home; but there intervened a period during which he heard nothing distinctly, and in which the only clear point to him was this gleam of starlight, and the accompanying sense of motion, which perplexed his faculties in his weakness. While he lay feverish and unconscious he kept repeating, to the amazement of the bystanders, two stray lines which had no apparent connexion with any of the circumstances surrounding him.

> "Each with its little span of sky,
> And little lot of stars,"

poor Colin said to himself over and over, without knowing it. It had been only for a moment that he opened his eyes out of the torpor which was all but death, but that moment was enough to colour all the wanderings of his mind while still the weakness of the body dominated and overpowered it. Like a picture or a dream, he kept in his recollection the sharp frosty glimmer, the cold twinkling of those passionless, distant lights, and with

it a sense of rushing air and universal chill, and a sound and consciousness of wending his way between rustling hedges, though all the while he was immovable. That feeling remained with him till he woke from a long sleep one afternoon when the twilight was setting in, and found himself in a room which was not his own room, lying in a great bed hung with crimson curtains, which were made still more crimson by a ruddy glow of fire-light which flashed reflections out of the great mirror opposite the end of the bed. Colin lay a while in a pause of wonder and confusion when he woke. The starlight went out of his eyes and the chill out of his frame, and a certain sense of languid comfort came over him. When he said, "Where am I?" faintly, in a voice which he could scarcely recognise for his own, two women rose hastily and approached him. One of these was Lady Frankland, the other a nurse. While the attendant hurried forward to see if he wanted anything, Lady Frankland took his hand and pressed it warmly in both hers.

"You shall hear all about it to-morrow," she said, with the tears in her eyes; "you will do well now, but you must not exert yourself to-night. We have all been so anxious about you. Hush, hush! You must take this; you must not ask any more questions to-night."

What he had to take was some warm jelly, of which he swallowed a little, with wonder and difficulty. He did not understand what had befallen him, or how he had been reduced to this invalid condition. "Hush, hush! you must not ask any questions to-night," said Lady Frankland; and she went to the door as if to leave the room, and then came back again and bent over Colin and kissed his forehead, with her eyes shining through tears. "God bless you and reward you!" she said, smiling and crying over him; "you will do well now—you have a mother's blessing and a mother's prayers," and with these strange words she went away hastily, as if not trusting herself to say more.

Colin lay back on his pillow with his mind full of wonder, and, catching at the clue she had given him, made desperate feeble efforts to piece it out, and get back again into his life. He found it so hard fighting through that moment of starlight which still haunted him, that he had to go to sleep upon it, but by-and-by woke up again when all was silent—when the light was shaded, and the nurse reclining in an easy chair, and everything betokened night—and lying awake for an hour or two, at last began to gather himself up, and recollect what had happened. He had almost leaped from his bed when he recalled the scene by the canal—his conviction that Frankland had gone down, his own desperate plunge. But Colin was past leaping from his bed, for that time at least. He followed out this recollection, painfully trying to think what had occurred. Was Harry Frankland alive or dead? Had he himself paused too long on the brink, and was the heir of Wodensbourne gone, out of all his privileges and superiorities? This was the interpretation that appeared most likely to Colin. It seemed to him to explain Lady Frankland's tears and pathos of gratitude. The tutor had suffered in his attempt to save the son, and the parents, moved by the tenderness of grief, were thankful for his ineffectual efforts. As he lay awake in the silence, it appeared to him that this was the explanation; and he too thought with a certain pathos and compunction of Harry—his instinctive rival, his natural opponent. Was it thus he had fallen, so near the beginning of the way—snatched out of the life which had so many charms, so many advantages for him? As Colin lay alone in the silence, his thoughts went out to that unknown life into which he could not but imagine the other young man, who was yesterday—was it yesterday?—as strong and life-like as himself, had passed so suddenly. Life had never seemed so fair, so bright, so hopeful to himself as while he thus followed with wistful eyes the imaginary path of Harry into the unknown awe

and darkness. The thought touched him deeply, profoundly, with wistful pity, with wonder and inquiry. Where was he now, this youth who had so lately been by his side? Had he found out those problems that trouble men for their life long? Had existence grown already clear and intelligible to the eyes which in this world had cared but little to investigate its mysteries?

While Colin's mind was thus occupied, it occurred to him suddenly to wonder why he himself was so ill and so feeble. He had no inclination to get up from the bed on which he lay. Sometimes he coughed, and the cough pained him; his very breathing was a fatigue to him now and then. As he lay pondering this new thought, curious half-recollections, as of things that had happened in a dream, came into Colin's mind; visions of doctors examining some one—he scarcely knew whether it was himself or another—and of conversations that had been held over his bed. As he struggled through these confusing mazes of recollection or imagination, his head began to ache and his heart to beat; and finally his uneasy movements woke the nurse, who was alarmed and would not listen to any of the questions he addressed to her. "My lady told you as you'd hear everything to-morrow," said Colin's attendant; "for goodness gracious sake take your draught, do, and lie still; and don't go a-moidering and a-bothering, and take away a poor woman's character, as was never known to fall asleep before, nor wouldn't but for thinking you was better and didn't want nothing." It was strange to the vigorous young man, who had never been in the hands of a nurse in his life, to feel himself constrained to obey—to feel, indeed, that he had no power to resist, but was reduced to utter humiliation and dependence, he could not tell how. He fell asleep afterwards, and dreamed of Harry Frankland drowning, and of himself going down, down through the muddy, black water—always down, in giddy circles of descent, as if it were bottomless. When he woke again it was morning, and his

attendant was putting his room to rights, and disposed to regard himself with more friendly eyes. "Don't you go disturbing of yourself," said the nurse, "and persuading of the doctor as you ain't no better. You're a deal better, if he did but know it. What's come to you? It's all along of falling in the canal that night along of Mr. Harry. If you takes care, and don't get no more cold, you'll do well."

"Along with Mr. Harry—poor Harry!—and he—?" said Colin. His own voice sounded very strange to him, thin and far-off, like a shadow of its former self. When he asked this question, the profoundest wistful pity filled the young man's heart. He was sorry to the depths of his soul for the other life which had, he supposed, gone out in darkness. "Poor Frankland!" he repeated to himself, with an action of mournful regret. *He* had been saved, and the other lost. So he thought, and the thought went to his heart.

"Mr. Harry was saved, sir, when you was drownded," said the nurse, who was totally unconscious of Colin's feelings; "he's fine and hearty again, is Mr. Harry. Bless you, a ducking ain't nothing to him. As for you," continued the woman, going calmly about her occupations—"they say it wasn't the drowning, it was the striking against——"

"I understand," said Colin. He stopped her further explanations with a curious sharpness which he was not responsible for, and at which he himself wondered. Was not he glad that Harry Frankland lived? But then, to be sure, there came upon him the everlasting contrast—the good fortune and unfailing luck of his rival, who was well and hearty, while Colin, who would have been in no danger but for him, lay helpless in bed! He began to chafe at himself, as he lay, angry and impotent, submitting to the nurse's attentions. What a poor weakling anybody must think him, to fall ill of the ducking which had done no harm to Harry! He felt ridiculous, contemptible, weak—

which was the worst of all—thinking with impatience of the thanks which presently Lady Frankland would come to pay him, and the renewed obligations of which the family would be conscious. If he only could get up, and get back to his own room! But, when he made the attempt, Colin was glad enough to fall back again upon his pillows, wondering and dismayed. Harry was well, and had taken no harm; what could be the meaning of *his* sudden and unlooked-for weakness?

Lady Frankland came into the room, as he had foreseen, while it was still little more than daylight of the winter morning. She had always been kind to Colin—indifferently, amiably kind, for the most part, with a goodness which bore no particular reference to him, but sprang from her own disposition solely. This time there was a change. She sat down by his side with nervous, wistful looks, with an anxious, almost frightened expression. She asked him how he was with a kind of tremulous tenderness, and questioned the nurse as to how he had slept. "I am so glad to hear you have had a refreshing sleep," she said, with an anxious smile, and even laid her soft white hand upon Colin's and caressed it as his own mother might have done, whilst she questioned his face, his aspect, his looks, with the speechless scrutiny of an anxious woman. Somehow these looks, which were so solicitous and wistful, made Colin more impatient than ever.

"I am at a loss to understand why I am lying here," he said, with a forced smile; "I used to think I could stand a ducking as well as most people. It is humiliating to find myself laid up like a child by a touch of cold water——"

"Oh, Mr. Campbell, pray don't say so," said Lady Frankland; "it was not the cold water; you know you struck against—— Oh, how can we thank you enough!—how can I ever express my gratitude!" said the poor lady, grasping his hands in both hers, while her eye filled unawares with tears.

"There is no need for gratitude," said Colin, drawing away his hand with an impatience which he could not have explained. "I am sorry to find myself such a poor creature that I have to be nursed, and give you trouble. Your son is all right, I hear." This he said with an effort at friendliness which cost him some trouble. He scorned to seem to envy the young favourite of fortune, but it was annoying to feel that the strength he was secretly proud of had given way at so slight a trial. He turned his face a little more towards the wall, and away from Harry's mother, as he spoke.

"Oh, yes," said Lady Frankland, "he is quite well, and he is very, very grateful to you, dear Mr. Campbell. Believe me, we are all very grateful. Harry is so shy; and he has never once had an opportunity to pay you that—that attention which you deserve at his hands; and it showed such noble and disinterested regard on your part——"

"Pray don't say so," said Colin, abruptly; "you make me uncomfortable; there was no regard whatever in the case."

"Ah, yes! you say so to lighten our sense of obligation," said Lady Frankland. "It is so good, so kind of you. And when I think what it has made you suffer—but I am sure you will believe that there is nothing we would not do to show our gratitude. If you were our own son neither Sir Thomas nor I could be more anxious. We have sent for Sir Apsley Wendown, and I hope he will arrive to-day; and we have sent for your dear Mother, Mr. Campbell——"

"My mother?" said Colin. He was so much startled that he raised himself up on his pillows without thinking, and as he did so was seized by a horrible pain which took away his breath. "Sir Aspley Wendown and my mother? What does it mean?" the young man said gasping, as he managed to slide down again into his former recumbent position. "Am I ill? or does all this commotion arise simply from an unlooked-for ducking

and a knock against the side of the canal." He got this out with difficulty, though he strove with all his might to conceal the trouble it gave him; then he turned his eyes to Lady Frankland, who sat wringing her hands and full of agitation by his bedside. The poor lady had altogether lost her good-natured and amiable composure. Whatever she had to say to him, whatever the character of the communication might be, it disturbed her greatly. She wrung her hands, and gave him a painful hurried glance, and then withdrew her eyes from his inquiring looks. All this time Colin lay impatient, looking at her, wondering, with a sharp sensation of anger, what she could have to say.

"Dear Mr. Campbell," she said at length, "you are ill; you have been wandering and insensible. Oh, it is hard to think you are suffering for your goodness, suffering for us! We could not trust you to our doctor here after we knew; we thought it best to have the best advice, and we thought you would prefer to have your mother. I would have nursed you myself and tended you night and day," said Lady Frankland, with enthusiasm; "I owe you that and a great deal more; you who have saved my dear boy."

"What is the matter with me?" said Colin. It appeared to him as if a great cloud was rolling up over the sky, throwing upon him a strange and ominous shadow. He scarcely heard what she said. He did not pay any attention to her. What was Henry Frankland's mother to him, or her thanks, or the things she was willing to do to show her gratitude? He wanted to know why he was lying there powerless, unable to move himself. That was the first thing to be thought of. As for Lady Frankland, she wrung her hands again, and hesitated more and more.

"I hope God will reward you," said the agitated woman; "I would give everything I have in the world to see you well and strong as you were when you came here. Oh, Mr. Campbell, if

you only could know the feeling that is in all our hearts!" It was her kindness, her reluctance to give him pain, her unfeigned distress, that made her prolong Colin's suspense, and drive him frantic with these exasperating professions of regard, for which, true as they doubtless were, he did not care.

"I suppose I've broken some of my bones," said Colin; "it would be real kindness if you would tell me what is the matter. Will it take a long time to mend me? I should be glad to know, at least, what it is."

Impelled by his looks and his tone, Lady Frankland burst into her statement at last. "You have broken some of your ribs," she said, "but I don't think that is of so much importance; Sir Apsley, when he comes, will tell us. He is coming to-day and you are looking so much better. It was old Mr. Eyre who gave us such a fright yesterday. He said your lungs had been injured somehow, and that you might never—that it might be a long time—that it might keep you delicate; but even if that were the case, with care and a warm climate—oh, Mr. Campbell! I think he is mistaken; he is always such a croaker. I think—I hope—I am almost sure Sir Apsley will set you all right."

Again Colin had risen in his bed with a little start. This time he was scarcely sensible of the pain which every motion caused him. He fancied afterwards that for that moment his heart stood still in his bosom, and the pulses in his veins stopped beating. The shock was so strange, so sudden, so unlooked-for. He sat up—struggled up—upon his pillows, and instinctively and unawares faced and confronted the new Thing which approached him. In that moment of strange consciousness and revelation he felt as if the intimation was true—as if his doom was sealed and his days numbered. He did not look at the anxious woman who was wringing her arms by his bedside, nor at any external object; but with an irresistible impulse con-

fronted dumbly the new world—the changed existence. When he laid himself down again it seemed to Colin as if years had passed over his head. He said some vague words of thanks, without being very well aware what he was saying, to Lady Frankland, and then lay silent, stunned and bewildered, like a man who had received a blow. What she said to him afterwards, or how long she remained in the room, he was scarcely aware of. Colin belonged to a race which had no weak members; he had been used to nothing but strength and health—wholesome rural life and vigour—all his days. He had even learned, without knowing it, to take a certain pride in his own physical gifts, and in those of his family, and to look with compassionate contempt on people who were "delicate" and obliged to take care of themselves. The idea that such a fate might by any possibility fall to himself had never once occurred to him. It was an impossible contingency at which, even a week ago, the strong young man, just entering upon the full possession of his powers, would have laughed, as beyond the range of imagination. He might die, no doubt, like any other man—might be snatched out of the world by violent disease or sudden fever, as other strong men had been; but to have his strength stolen from him while still his life remained, had appeared a thing beyond the bounds of possibility until now.

But as Colin lay helpless, stunned by this unlooked-for downfall, there came before his eyes, as vividly as if he saw them in actual presence, the sick people of his native district—the young men and the young women who now and then paid, even on the sweet shores of the Holy Loch, the terrible toll which consumption takes of all the nations of the north. One of them, a young man about his own age, who like himself had been in training for the Scotch Church, whom Colin had pitied with all his kind heart—with the deepest half-remorseful sense of his own superior happiness—came before him with intense distinct-

ness as he lay struck silent by the cold shadow of fate. He could almost have thought that he saw the spectral attenuated form, with its hectic cheeks, its thin, long, wasted hands, its preternatural length of limb, seated in the old, high-backed easy-chair in the farmhouse parlour. All the invalid's life appeared to him in a sudden flash of recollection; the kindly neighbours' visits; the books and papers which were lent him; the soup and jellies which the minister's wife and the other ladies of the parish, few in number as they were, kept him provided with. Colin could even remember his own periodical visits; his efforts to think what would interest the sick man; his pity, and wonder, and almost contempt, for the patience which could endure, and even take a pleasure in, the poor comforts of the fading life. God help him! was this what he himself was coming to? was this all he had to anticipate? Colin's heart gave a strange leap in his breast at the thought. A sudden wild throb, a sense of something intolerable, a cry against the fate which was too hard, which could not be borne, rose within him, and produced a momentary sickness which took the light out of his eyes, and made everything swim round him in a kind of dizzy gloom. Had he been standing he would have fallen down, and the bystanders would have said he had fainted. But he had not fainted; he was bitterly, painfully conscious of everything. It was only his heart that fluttered in his breast like a wounded bird; it was only his mind that had been struck, and reeled. So much absorbed was he that he did not hear the voice of the nurse, who brought him some invalid nourishment, and who became frightened when she got no answer, and shook him violently by the arm. "Lord bless us, he's gone," exclaimed the woman; and she was but little reassured when her patient turned upon her with dry lips and a glittering eye. "I am not gone yet," said Colin; "there is no such luck for me;" and then he began once more to picture out to himself the sick man

at the Holy Loch, with the little tray on the table beside him, and his little basin of soup. God help him! was this how he was to be for all the rest of his life?

This was how he sustained the first physical shock of the intimation which poor Lady Frankland had made to him with so much distress and compunction. It is hard enough at any time to receive a sentence of death; yet Colin could have died bravely had that been all that was required of him. It was the life in death thus suddenly presented before his eyes that appalled his soul and made his heart sick. And after that, Heaven knows, there were other considerations still more hard to encounter. If we were to say that the young man thus stopped short in the heyday of his life bethought himself immediately of what is called preparation for dying, it would be false and foolish. Colin had a desperate passage to make before he came to that. As these moments, which were like hours, passed on, he came to consider the matter in its larger aspects. But for Harry Frankland he would have been in no danger, and now Harry Frankland was safe, strong, and in the full enjoyment of his life, while Colin lay broken and helpless, shipwrecked at the beginning of his career. Why was it? Had God ordained this horrible injustice, this cruel fate? As Colin looked at it, out of the clouds that were closing round him, that fair career which was never to be accomplished stretched bright before him, as noble a future as ever was contemplated by man. It had its drawbacks and disadvantages when he looked at it a week before, and might, perhaps, have turned out a common-place life enough had it come to its daily fulfilment; but now, when it had suddenly become impossible, what a career it seemed! Not of selfish profit, of money-making, or personal advantage—a life which was to be for the use of his country, for the service of his Church, for the furtherance of everything that was honest and lovely, and of good report. He stood here, stayed upon the

threshold of his life, and looked at it with wonder and despair. This existence God had cut short and put an end to. Why? That another man might live and enjoy his common-place pleasures—might come into possession of all the comforts of the world, might fill a high position without knowing, without caring for it; might hunt, and shoot, and fall asleep after dinner as his father had done before him. In the great darkness Colin's heart cried out with a cry of anguish and terrible surprise to the invisible, inexorable God, "Why? Why?" Was one of His creatures less dear, less precious to Him than another, that He should make this terrible difference? The pure life, the high hopes, the human purpose and human happiness, were they as nothing to the great Creator who had brought them into being and suffered them to bud and blossom only that He might crush them with His hands? Colin lay still in his bed, with his lips set close and his eyes straining into that unfathomable darkness. The bitterness of death took possession of his soul—a bitterness heavier, more terrible than that of death. His trust, his faith, had given way. God sat veiled upon his awful throne, concealed by a horrible cloud of disappointment and incomprehension. Neither love nor justice, neither mercy nor equal dealing, was in this strange, unintelligible contrast of one man's loss and another man's gain. As the young man lay struggling in this hour of darkness, the God of his youth disappeared from him, the Saviour of his childhood withdrew, a sorrowful shadow, into the angry heavens. What was left? Was it a capricious Deity, ruled by incomprehensible impulses of favour and of scorn? Was it a blind and hideous Chance, indifferent alike to happiness and misery? Was it some impious power, owning no everlasting rule of right and wrong, of good and evil, who trampled at its will upon the hearts and hopes of men? Colin was asking himself these terrible questions when the curtain was softly drawn, and a face looked down upon him, in which

tenderness and grief and pity had come to such a climax as no words could convey any impression of. It was his mother who stood beside him, stretching out her arms like a pitying angel, yearning over him with the anguish and the impatience of love. Sometimes, surely, the Master gives us in the fellowship of His sufferings a human pang beyond His own—the will to suffer in the stead of those we love, without the power.

CHAPTER XX.

"THEY'RE awfu' grateful, Colin—I canna but say that for them," said Mrs. Campbell; "and as anxious as if you were their own son. I'll no undertake to say that I havena an unchristian feeling myself to Harry Frankland; but, when you're a' weel and strong, Colin,"—

"And what if I am never well and strong?" said the young man. His mother's presence had subdued and silenced, at least, for a time, the wild questions in his heart. She had taken them upon herself, though he did not know it. So far human love can stretch its fellowship in the sufferings of its Master,—not to the extent of substitution, of salvation temporal or spiritual, but, at least, to a modified deliverance. She had soothed her son and eased him of his burden, but in so doing had taken it to herself. The eagle that had been gnawing his heart had gone to fix its talons in hers; but she carried it like the Spartan, under her mantle, and smiled while it rent her in twain.

"Whisht, whisht!" she said, in her martyrdom of composure and calm looks, and took her boy's hand and held it between hers—God only could tell how fondly—with a firm, warm grasp that seemed to hold him fast to life. "Colin, my man, it's a' in God's hands," said the Mistress of Ramore; "whiles His ways are awfu' mysterious. I'm no one that pretends to read them, or see a'thing plain, like some folk; but I canna think He ever makes a mistake or lets anything go by hazard. We'll bide His time, Colin; and who can tell what mercy and goodness he may have in His hand?"

"Mercy and goodness, or, perhaps, the contrary," said Colin. If he had not been a little comforted and eased in his heart, he would not have given utterance to words which he felt to be unchristian. But now, with his longing to be soothed and to accept the softening influence which surrounded him, came an impulse to speak,—to use words which were even more strong than his feelings. As for his mother, she was too thoughtful a woman, and had in her own heart too heavy a burden, to be shocked by what he said.

"Maybe what appears to us the contrary," she said, "though that maun be but an appearance, like most things in this life. I'm no one to deny my ain heart, or make a show as if I understood the ways of the Lord, or could, aye, in my poor way, approve of them, if a mortal creature might daur to say so, Colin. There's things He does that appear a' wrang to me—I canna but say it. I'm no doubting His wisdom nor yet His love, but there's mony a thing He does that I canna follow, nor see onything in but loss and misery. But oh, Colin, my bonnie man, that's nae cause for doubting Him! He maun have His ain reasons, and they maun be better reasons than ours. If you'll close your eyes, and try and get a sleep, I'll take a breath of air to myself before night sets in. I was aye an awfu' woman for the air; and eh, laddie! I think ye'll be thankful to get back to Ramore after this dreary country, where there's neither hill nor glen—though maybe it might be cauld for you in the spring, when there's so much soft weather," said the tender woman, smoothing his pillows, and bending over him with her anxious smile. "It minds me o' the time when you were my baby, Colin, to get you into my hands again. They say a woman's aye a queen in a sick room," said the Mistress. Her smile was such that tears would have been less sad; and she was impatient to be gone—to leave her son's bedside—because she felt herself at the furthest stretch of endurance, and knew

that her strained powers must soon give way. Perhaps Colin, too, understood what it was that made his mother so anxious to leave him, for he turned his face to the waning evening light, and closed his eyes, and after a while seemed to sleep. When he had lain thus quietly for some time, the poor mother stole downstairs and out into the wintry twilight. Her heart was breaking in her tender bosom; her strength had been strained to the utmost bounds of possibility; and nature demanded at least the relief of tears.

Two days before the Mistress had been tranquil and content in her peaceful life at home. When Sir Thomas Frankland's telegram came late at night, like a sudden thunderbolt into the quiet house, the Holy Loch was asleep and at rest, cradled in sweet darkness, and watched by fitful glances of that moon for which Colin and his friends had looked to guide them on the night of the accident; and no means of communicating with the world until the morning was possible to the inhabitants of Ramore. The anxious mother, whose eyes had not been visited with sleep through all the lingering winter night, set off by dawn to thread her weary unaccustomed way through all the mazes of the railways which were to convey her to Wodensbourne. She had neither servant nor friend to manage for her; and no fine lady, accustomed to the most careful guardianship, could be more unused to the responsibilities of travelling than Mrs. Campbell. When she arrived, it was to find her boy, her firstborn, stretched helpless upon his bed, to see the examination made by the great doctor from London, to hear his guarded statements, his feebly-expressed hopes, which conveyed only despair—and with that sudden arrow quivering in her heart to undertake the duties of a cheerful nurse—to keep smiling upon Colin, telling him the news of the parish, and the events of the countryside, as if her coming here had been a holiday. All this, put together—though so many women

have borne it, and though the Mistress of Ramore was able to bear it, and more, for her boy's sake—was a hard strain upon her. When she got downstairs into the air, the first thing she did was to sit down on the steps of the glass door which led into the terrace and cry bitterly and silently. She was alone among strangers, with scarcely even a friendly feature of familiar nature to give her a little confidence. The aspect of the great house, stretching its long wings and solemn front into the twilight, containing a whole community of people unknown to her, whose very voices were strange and sounded like a foreign tongue, completed the forlorn sense she had of absence from everything that could help or console; and when, in the restlessness of her musing, she got up and began to walk about upon that deserted terrace which Colin had paced so often, all Colin's questions, all his doubts, rushed with double force and feminine passion into his mother's mind.

As she pursued her uncertain way, her eye was attracted by the lights in the windows. One of them was large and low, and so close upon the terrace that she could not help seeing the interior, and what was passing there. Harry Frankland was standing by the fire with his cousin. The long billiard-table behind them, and the cue which Miss Matty still held in her hand, did not enlighten Mrs. Campbell as to what they had been doing. Matty had laid her disengaged hand on her cousin's shoulder, and was looking up, as if pleading for something, into his face; and the fire-light which gleamed upon them both, gave colour and brightness to the two young faces, which seemed to the sorrowful woman outside to be glowing with health and love and happiness. When Mrs. Campbell looked upon this scene her heart cried out in her breast. It was Colin's question that came to her lips as she hurried past in the cold and the gathering darkness—"Why? Oh God! why?" Her son struck to the earth in the bloom of his young life—rooted up like a young

tree, or a silly flower—and this youth, this other woman's son, taking the happiness which should have been for Colin. Why was it? The poor woman called in her misery upon the heavens and the earth to answer her. One deprived of all, another possessed of everything that soul of man could desire; one heart smitten and rent asunder, and another filled to overflowing with safety and happiness.

As she went on in her haste, without knowing where she went, another window caught the Mistress's eye. It was the nursery window where all the little ones were holding high carnival. Little boys and little girls, the younger branches of the large happy family, with again the light gleaming rosy over their childish faces. One of them was having her toilette made for presentation in the drawing-room, and at sight of her another blow, keen and poignant, went to Mrs. Campbell's heart. Just such a child had been the little maiden, the little daughter who once made sunshine in the homely house of Ramore. It came upon the poor mother in the darkness to think what that child would have been to her now had she lived—how her woman child would have suffered with her, wept with her, helped to bear the burden of her woe. Her heart yearned and longed in her new grief over the little one who had been gone so many years. She turned away hastily from the bright window and the gay group and sank down upon her knees on the groond with a sob that came from her heart—"Why? oh why?" God had His reasons, but what were they? The agony of loss, in which there seemed no possible gain; the bitterness of suffering, without knowing any reason for it, overpowered her. The contrast of her own trouble with the happiness, the full possession, the universal prosperity and comfort which she saw, struck her sharply with something which was not envy of her neighbour, but the appeal of an amazed anguish to God. "The ways of the Lord are not equal," she was saying in her soul. Was it, as

Nature suggested, with natural groans, because He loved her less—or, as the minister said, because He loved her more, that God sent upon her those pangs, and demanded from her those sacrifices? Thus she cried out of the depths, not knowing what she said. "If I had but had my Jeanie!" the poor woman moaned to herself, with a vision of a consoling angel, a daughter, another dearer, fairer self, who would have helped to bear all her burdens. But God had not afforded her that comfort, the dearest consolation to a woman. When she had wept out those few bitter tears, that are all of which the heart is capable when it is no longer young, she gathered herself up out of the darkness and prepared to go back again to Colin's bedside. Though she had received no answer to her question—though neither God Himself nor His angels, nor any celestial creature, had gleamed through the everlasting veil, and given her a glimpse of that Divine meaning which it is so hard to read—there was a certain relief in the question itself, and in the tears that had been wrung out of her heart. And so it was that, when Matty Frankland came lightly out of the billiard-room, on her way to dress for dinner, Mrs. Campbell, whom she met coming in from the terrace, did not appear to her to bear a different aspect from that which the Mistress of Ramore had borne in other days.

Matty did not lose a minute in making her advances to Colin's mother. She was, indeed, extremely sorry, and had even been conscious of a passing thought similar to that which had struggled passionately into being, both in Colin's mind and in his mother's—a passing sense of wonder why Harry, who was good for nothing in particular, should have been saved, and Colin, who was what Miss Matty called "so very clever," should have been the sufferer. Such a doubt, had it gone deep enough—had it become an outcry of the soul, as it was with the others—would have made an infidel of that little woman of the world. She ran to Mrs. Campbell, and took her hand, and led her into the

billiard-room, the door of which stood open. "Oh, dear Mrs. Campbell, come and tell me about him," she said; and, as it had been the conjunction of a little real feeling with her habitual wiles that brought Colin under her influence, the same thing moved his mother at least to tolerate the inquiry. She drew away her hand with some impatience from the little enchantress, but her tender heart smote her when she saw an involuntary tear in Matty's eye. Perhaps, after all, it was less her fault than her misfortune; and the Mistress followed the girl into the room with less dislike, and more toleration, than she could have supposed possible. It might be, after all, the older people—to whom worldliness came by nature, as she was disposed to think—who were to blame.

"Oh, Mrs. Campbell, I am so sorry; I cannot tell you how sorry I am," cried Matty—and she spoke only the truth, and had real tears in her eyes—"to think that he should save my cousin again, and suffer so for his goodness. Don't be angry with us—though, indeed, I should not wonder if you could not bear our very name—I am sure I could not, if I were you."

"Na, God forbid," said the Mistress. She was but half-satisfied of the reality of the young lady's professions, and this suspicion, so unusual to her, gave dignity to her speech. "It wasna you nor ony mortal person, but his own heart that moved my Colin. You could do an awfu' deal," said Colin's mother, looking with a woman's look of disapproving admiration on Matty's pretty face, "but you couldna move my son like his ain generous will. He never was one to think of his ain—comfort—" continued Mrs. Campbell with a little shudder, for something in her throat prevented her from saying his life—"when a fellow creature was in danger. It was his ain heart that was to blame—if anything was to blame—and not you."

And the homely woman's eyes went beyond her questioner with that same look which in Colin had so often baffled Miss Matty,

showing that the higher spirit had gone past the lesser into its own element, where only its equals could follow. The girl was awed for the moment and humbled. Not for her poor sake, not for Harry Frankland, who was of no great account to anybody out of his immediate family—but because of his own nature, which would not permit him to see another perish, had Colin suffered. This thought, imperfectly as she understood it, stopped the voluble sympathy, pity and distress on Matty's lips. She no longer knew what to say, and, after an awkward pause, could only stammer over her old common-places. "Oh, dear Mrs. Campbell, I am so sorry; I would give anything in the world to make him well again; and I only hope you won't be angry with us," said Matty, with a suppressed sob, which was partly fright and partly feeling. The Mistress came to herself at the sound of the girl's voice.

"I'm no angry," she said—"God forbid; though I might have something to say to *you* if my heart could speak. The like of you whiles do mair harm in this world, Miss Frankland, than greater sinners. I'm no saying you kent what you were doing; but, if it had not been for you, my Colin would never have come near this place. You beguiled my son with your pleasant words and your bonnie face. He had nae mair need to come here to be tutor to yon bit crooked callant," said the Mistress, with involuntary bitterness, "than Maister Frankland himself. But he thought to be near you, that had beguiled him and made him give mair heed to your fables than to anything that was true in life. I'm no blaming my Colin," said the Mistress, with an unconscious elevation of her head; "he never had kent onything but truth a' his days, and, if he wasna to believe in a woman that smiled on him and enticed him to her, what was he to believe in at his years? Nor I'm no to call angry at you," said Colin's mother, looking from the elevation of age and nature upon Miss Matty, who drooped instinctively, and

became conscious what a trifling little soul she was. "We a' act according to our ain nature, and you wasna capable of perceiving what harm you could do; but, if you should ever encounter again one that was true himself and believed in you——"

Here Matty, who had never been destitute of feeling, and who, in her heart, was fond of Colin in her way, and had a kind of understanding of him, so far as she could go, fell into such an outburst of natural tears as disarmed the Mistress, who faltered and stopped short, and had hard ado to retain some appearance of severity in sight of this weeping, for which she was not prepared. Colin's mother understood truth, and in an abhorring, indignant, resentful way, believed that there was falsehood in the world. But how truth and falsehood were mingled—how the impulses of nature might have a little room to work even under the fictions of art or the falseness of society—was a knowledge unimagined by the simple woman. She began to think she had done Matty injustice when she saw her tears.

"Oh, Mrs. Campbell, I know how good he is! I—I never knew any one like him. How could I help——? But, indeed —indeed, I never meant any harm!" cried Matty, ingeniously taking advantage of the truth of her own feelings, so far as they went, to disarm her unconscious and singleminded judge. The Mistress looked at her with puzzled, but pitiful eyes.

"It would be poor comfort to him to say you never meant it," she said; and in the pause that followed Matty had begun to recollect that it was a long time since the dressing-bell rang, though she still had her face hid on the table, and the tears were not dried from her cheeks. "And things may turn out more merciful than they look like," said the Mistress, with a sigh and a wistful smile. Perhaps it occurred to her that the gratitude of the Franklands might go so far as to bestow upon Colin the woman he loved. "I'll no keep you longer," she continued,

laying her tender hand for a moment on Matty's head. "God bless you for every kind thought you ever had to my Colin. He's weel worthy of them all," said the wistful mother.

Matty, who did not know what to say, and who, under this touch, felt her own artifice, and was for a moment disgusted with herself, sprang up in a little agony of shame and remorse, and kissed Mrs. Campbell as she went away. And Colin's mother went back to her son's room to find him asleep, and sat down by his side, to ponder in herself whether this and that might not still be possible. Love and happiness were physicians in whom the simple woman had a confidence unbounded. If they came smiling hand in hand to Colin's pillow, who could tell what miracle of gladness might yet fall from the tender heavens?

CHAPTER XXI.

But, though Mrs. Campbell's heart relented towards Matty, and was filled with vague hopes which centred in her, it was very hard to find out what Colin's thoughts were on the same subject. He scarcely spoke of the Franklands at all, and never named or referred to the ladies of the house. When his mother spoke, with natural female wiles to tempt him into confidence, of special inquiries made for him, Colin took no notice of the inference. She even went so far as to refer specially to Miss Matty with no greater effect. "There's one in the house as anxious as me," said the Mistress, with tender exaggeration, as she smoothed his pillow and made her morning inquiries; but her son only smiled faintly, and shook his head with an almost imperceptible movement of incredulity. He asked no questions, showed no pleasure at the thought, but lay most of the day in a silence which his mother could find no means of breaking.

The first horror, the first resistance, had gone out of Colin's mind; but he lay asking himself inevitable questions, facing the great problem for which he could find no solution, which no man has been able to explain. Had the thoughts of his mind been put into words, the chances are that to most people who have never themselves come to such a trial Colin would have seemed a blasphemer or an infidel. But he was neither the one nor the other, and was indeed incapable by nature either of scepticism or of profanity. The youth had been born of a sternly-believing race, which recognised in all God's doings an eternal right, beyond justice and beyond reason, a right to deal with them and

theirs as he might please; but Colin himself was of the present age, and was fully possessed by all those cravings after understanding and explanation which belong to the time. Without any doubt of God, he was arrested by the wonderful mystery of Providence, and stood questioning, in the face of the unanswering silence, "Why?" The good God, the God of the Gospels, the Father of our Lord, was the Divine Ruler whom Colin recognised in his heart; but the young man longed and struggled to find reasonableness, coherence, any recognisable, comprehensible cause, for the baffling arrangements and disarrangements, the mysterious inequalities and injustices of life. He wanted to trace the thread of reason which God kept in His own hand; he wanted to make out why the Father who loved all should dispense so unequally, so differently, His gifts to one and another. This awful question kept him silent for days and nights; he could not make anything of it. Social inequalities, which speculatists fret at, had not much disturbed Colin. It had not yet occurred to him that wealth or poverty made much difference; but why the life of one should be broken off incomplete and that of another go on—why the purposes of one should end in nothing, why his hopes should be crushed and his powers made useless, while another flourished and prospered, confounded him, in the inexperience of his youth. And neither heaven nor earth gave him any answer. The Bible itself seemed to append moral causes, which were wanting in his case, to the perennial inequalities of existence. It spoke of the wicked great in power, flourishing like the green bay-tree, and of the righteous oppressed and suffering for righteousness' sake; which was, in its way, a comprehensible statement of the matter. But the facts did not agree in Colin's case. Harry Frankland could not, by any exertion of dislike, be made to represent the wicked, nor was Colin, in his own thinking, better than his neighbour. They were two sons of one Father, to whom that Father was behaving with the

most woeful, the most extraordinary partiality; and nothing in heaven or earth was of half so much importance as to prove the proceedings of the Father of all to be everlastingly just and of sublime reason. What did it mean? This was what Colin was discussing with himself as he lay on his bed. It was not wonderful that such thoughts should obliterate the image of Miss Matty. When she came into his mind at all, he looked back upon her with a pensive sweetness as on somebody he had known a lifetime before. Sterner matters had now taken the place of the light love and hopes of bountiful and lavish youth. The hopes had grown few, and the abundance changed into poverty. If the author of the change had chosen to reveal the cause for it, the young soul thus stopped short in his way could have consented that all was well.

And then Lady Frankland came every day to pay him a visit of sympathy, and to express her gratitude. "It is such a comfort to see him looking so much better," Lady Frankland said; "Harry would like so much to come and sit with you, dear Mr. Campbell. He could read to you, you know, when you feel tired; I am sure nothing he could do would be too much to show his sense of your regard——"

At which words Colin raised himself up.

"I should be much better pleased," said Colin, "if you would not impute to me feelings which I don't pretend to. It was no regard for Mr. Frankland that induced me——"

"Oh, indeed! I know how good your are," said Harry's mother, pressing his hand, "always so generous and disposed to make light of your own kindness; but we all know very well, and Harry knows, that there is many a brother who would not have done so much. I am sure I cannot express to you a tenth part of what I feel. Harry's life is so precious," said my Lady, with a natural human appreciation of her own concerns, and unconscious, unintentional indifference to those of others. "The

eldest son; and Sir Thomas has quite commenced to rely upon him for many things—and I am sure I don't know what I should do without Harry to refer to," Lady Frankland continued, with a little smile of maternal pride and triumph. When she came to this point, it chanced to her to catch a side glimpse of Mrs. Campbell's face. The Mistress sat by her son's bedside, pale, with her lips set close, and her eyes fixed upon the hem of her apron, which she was folding and refolding in her hands. She did not say anything, nor give utterance in any way to the dumb remonstrance and reproach with which her heart was bursting; but there was something in her face which imposed silence upon the triumphant, prosperous woman beside her. Lady Frankland gave a little gasp of mingled fright and compunction. She did not know what to say to express her full sense of the service which Colin had done her; and there was nothing strange in her instinctive feeling, that she, a woman used to be petted and tended all her life, had a natural claim upon other people's services. She was very sorry, of course, about Mr. Campbell; if any exertion of hers could have cured him, he would have been well in half-an-hour. But, as it was, it appeared to her rather natural than otherwise that the tutor should suffer and that her own son should be saved.

"I felt always secure about Harry when you were with him," she said, with an involuntary artifice. "He was so fond of you, Mr. Campbell—and I always felt that you knew how important his safety was, and how much depended—"

"Pardon me," said Colin; he was angry in his weakness at her pertinacity. "I have no right to your gratitude. Your son and I have no love for each other, Lady Frankland. I picked him out of the canal, not because I thought of the importance of his life, but because I had seen him go down, and should have felt myself a kind of murderer had I not tried to save him. That is the whole. Why should I be supposed to have any

special regard for him? Perhaps," said Colin, whose words came slowly and whose voice was interrupted by his weakness —"I would have given my life with more comfort for any other man."

"Oh Mr. Campbell! don't be so angry and bitter. After all, it was not our fault," said Lady Frankland, with a wondering offence and disappointment—and then she hurriedly changed her tone, and began to congratulate his mother on his improved looks. "I am so glad to see him looking so much better. There were some people coming here," said my lady, faltering a little; "we would not have them come so long as he was so ill. Neither Harry nor any of us could have suffered it. We had sent to put them off; but, now that he is so much better—" said Lady Frankland, with a voice which was half complaint and half appeal. She thought it was rather ill-tempered of the mother and son to make so little response. "When I almost asked their permission!" she said, with a little indignation, when she had gone downstairs; "but they seem to think they should be quite masters, and look as black as if we had done them an injury. Send to everybody, and say it is to be on Wednesday, Matty; for Henry's interests must not be neglected." *It* was a ball, for which Lady Frankland had sent out her invitations some time before the accident; for Harry Frankland was to ask the suffrages of the electors of Earie at the approaching election. "I don't mean to be ungrateful to Mr. Campbell," said the Lady of Wodensbourne, smoothing her ruffled plumes. "I am sure nobody can say I have not been grateful; but, at the same time, I can't be expected to sacrifice my own son." Such were the sentiments with which Lady Frankland came downstairs. As for the other mother, it would be hard to describe what was in her mind. In the bitterness of her heart she was angry with the God who had no pity upon her. If Harry Frankland's life was precious, what was Colin's? and the Mistress, in her anguish,

made bitter comparisons, and cried out wildly with a woman's passion. Downstairs, in the fine rooms which her simple imagination filled with splendour, they would dance and sing unconcerned, though her boy's existence hung trembling in the balance: and was not Heaven itself indifferent, taking no notice? She was glad that twilight was coming on to conceal her face, and that Colin, who lay very silent, did not observe her. And so, while Lady Frankland, feeling repulsed and injured, managed to escape partially from the burden of an obligation which was too vast to be borne, and returned to the consideration of her ball, the two strangers kept silence in the twilight chamber, each dumbly contending with doubts that would not be overcome, and questions which could not be answered. What did God mean by permitting this wonderful, this incomprehensible difference between the two? But the great Father remained silent and made no reply. The days of revelation, of explanation were over. For one, joy and prosperity; for another, darkness and the shadow of death—plain facts not to be misconceived or contested—and in all the dumb heavens and silent observant earth no wisdom nor knowledge which could tell the reason why.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Ay, I heard of the accident. No that I thought anything particular of that. You're no the kind of callant, nor come of the kind of race, to give in to an accident. I came for my own pleasure. I hope I'm old enough to ken what pleases myself. Take your dinner, callant, and leave me to mind my business. I could do that much before you were born."

It was Lauderdale who made this answer to Colin's half-pleased, half-impatient questioning. The new comer sat, gaunt and strange, throwing a long shadow over the sick-bed, and looking, with a suppressed emotion, more pathetic than tears, upon the tray which was placed on a little table by Colin's side. It was a sad sight enough. The young man, in the flush and beauty of his youth, with his noble physical development, and the eager soul that shone in his eyes, laid helpless, with an invalid's repast before him, for which he put out his hand with a languid movement like a sick child. Lauderdale himself looked haggard and careworn. He had travelled by night, and was unshaven and untrimmed, with a wild gleam of exhaustion and hungry anxiety in his eyes.

"Whatever the reason may be, we're real glad to see you," said Mrs. Campbell. "If I could have wished for anything to do Colin good more than he's getting, it would have been you. But he's a great deal better—a wonderful deal better; you would not know him for the same creature that he was when I came here; and I'm in great hopes he'll no need to be sent away for the rest of the winter, as the doctor said,"

said the sanguine mother, who had reasoned herself into hope. She looked with wistful inquiry as she spoke into Lauderdale's eyes, trying hard to read there what was the opinion of the new comer. "It would be an awfu' hard thing for me to send him away by himsel', and him no strong," said the Mistress, with a hope that his friend would say that Colin's looks did not demand such a proceeding, but that health would come back to him with the sweet air of the Holy Loch.

"I heard of that," said Lauderdale, "and, to tell the truth, I'm tired of staying in one place all my life mysel'. If a man is to have no more good of his ain legs than if he were a vegetable, I see no good in being a man; it would save an awfu' deal of trouble to turn a cabbage at once. So I'm thinking of taking a turn about the world as long as I'm able; and, if Colin likes to go with me——"

"Which means, mother, that he has come to be my nurse," said Colin, whose heart was climing into his throat; "and here I lie like a log, and will never be able to do more than say thanks. Lauderdale——"

"Whisht, callant," said the tender giant, who stood looking down upon Colin with eyes which would not trust themselves to answer the mother's appealing glances; "I'm terrible fatigued with my life, and no able to take the trouble of arguing the question. Not that I consent to your proposition, which has a fallacy on the face of it; for it would be a bonnie-like thing to hear you say thanks either to your mother or me. Since I've been in my situation—which, maybe, I'll tell you more about by-and-bye, now that my mouth's opened—I've saved a little siller, a hundred pounds—or maybe mair," said the philosopher, with a momentary smile, "and I see no reason why I shouldna have my bit holiday as well as other folk. I've worked long for it." He turned away just then, attracted by a gleam of sunshine at the window, his companion thought, and stood looking out

disposing as he best could of a little bitter moisture that had gathered in the deep corners of his eyes. "It'll no be very joyful when it comes," he said to himself, with a pang of which nobody was aware, and stood forming his lips into an inaudible whistle to conceal how they quivered. He, too, had built high hopes upon this young head which was now lying low. He had said to himself, with the involuntary bitterness of a mind disappointed and forlorn, that here at least was a life free from all shadows—free from the fate that seemed to follow all who belonged to himself—through which he might again reconcile himself to Providence, and re-connect himself with existence. As he stood now, with his back to Colin, Lauderdale was again going over the burning ploughshares, enduring the fiery ordeal. Once more his unselfish hope was going out in darkness. When he turned round again his lips had steadied into the doleful turn of a familiar air, which was connected in Colin's mind with many an amusing and many a tender recollection. Between the two people who were regarding him with love and anguish so intense, the sick youth burst into pleasant laughter—laughter which had almost surprised the bystanders into helpless tears—and repeated, with firmer breath than Lauderdale's, the fragment of his favourite air.

"He never gets beyond that bar," said Colin. "It carries me back to Glasgow and all the old days. We used to call it Lauderdale's pibroch. Give me my dinner, mother. I don't see what I should grumble about as long as you and he are by me. Help me to get up, old fellow," the young man said, holding out his hands; and he ate his invalid meal cheerfully, with eager questions about all his old companions, and bursts of passing laughter, which to the ears of his friend were more terrible than so many groans. As for the Mistress, she had got used by this time to connect together those two ideas of Colin and a sick-bed, the conjunction of which was as yet misery to

Lauderdale; and she was glad in her boy's pleasure, and took trembling hope from every new evidence of his unbroken spirit. Before long the old current of talk had flowed into its usual channel; and, but for the strange, novel circumstances which surrounded them, one at least of the party might have forgotten for the moment that they were not in the pleasant parlour of Ramore; but that one did not see his own countenance, its eloquent brightness, its flashes of sudden colour, and the shining of its too brilliant eyes. But there could not be any doubt that Colin improved from that moment. Lauderdale had secured a little lodging in the village, from which he came every morning to the "callant," in whom his disappointed spirit, too careless of personal good, too meditative and speculative for any further ambition on his own account, had fixed its last hopes. He even came, in time, after he had accustomed himself to the young man's illness, to share, by moments, in the Mistress's hopes. When Colin at last got up from his bed, it was Lauderdale's arm he leant on. That was an eventful day to the little anxious group in the sick chamber, whose hopes sometimes leapt to certainty, but whose fears, with an intuition deeper still, sometimes fell to the other extreme, and were hushed in the silence of an anguish too deep to be fathomed, from which thought itself drew back. It was a bright winter day, with symptoms of spring in the air, when the young patient got up from his weary bed. Colin made very light of his weakness in the rising tide of his spirits. He faultered across the room upon Lauderdale's arm, to look out again, as he said, upon the world. It was an unfortunate moment for his first renewal of acquaintance with the bright outside sphere of ordinary life, which had passed on long ago, and forgotten Colin. The room in which they had placed him when his illness began was one of the best rooms in the house, and looked out upon the terrace and the big holly-trees which Colin knew so well. It was the morning of the day on

which Lady Frankland's ball was to take place, and symptoms of excitement and preparation were apparent. Immediately in front of the window, when Colin looked out, Miss Matty was standing in animated talk with her cousin. They had been loitering about, as people do in the morning about a country house, with no particular occupation—for the sun was warm, though it was still only the end of January—and Matty was at the moment engaged in indicating some special designs of her own which were involved in Lady Frankland's alterations in the flower-garden, for Harry's approval. She had, indeed, just led him by the sleeve into the midst of the half-completed design, and was describing circles round him with the walking-stick which she had taken out of his hand for the purpose, as Colin stood tremulous and uncertain by the window, looking out. Nobody could look brighter than Miss Matty; nobody more happy than the heir of Wodensbourne. If the sick man had entertained any hope that his misfortune threw a sympathetic shadow over them, he must now have been undeceived very summarily. Colin, however, bore the trial without flinching. He looked at them as if they were miles or ages away, with a strange smile, which did not seem to the anxious spectators to have any bitterness in it. But he made no remark until he had left the window, and taken his place on the sofa which had been arranged for him by the fire. Then he smiled again, without looking at any one, with abstract eyes, which went to the hearts of his attendants. "How far off the world seems," said Colin. "I feel as if I ought to be vexed by that pretty scene on the terrace. Don't you think so, mother? But I am not vexed, no more than if it was a picture. I wonder what it means?"

"Eh, Colin, my man, it means you're getting strong and no heeding about them and their vanities," cried the Mistress, whose indignant eyes were full of tears; but Colin only shook his head and smiled, and made no reply. *He* was not indignant.

He did not seem to care or be interested one way or other; but, as a spectator might have done, mused on the wonderful contrast, and asked himself what God could mean by it?—a question which there was no one to answer. Later the curate came to visit him, as indeed he had done several times before, praying out of his well-worn prayer-book by Colin's bedside in a way which at first scandalized the Mistress, who had, however, become used to him by this time. "It's better to speak out of a book than to speak nonsense," Mrs. Campbell had said; "but eh, Colin, it's awfu' to think that a man like that hasna a word out of his ain heart to make intercession for his fellow-creatures when they're in trouble." However, the curate was kind, and the mother was speedily mollified. As for that excellent clergyman himself, he did not at all understand the odd company in which he found himself when he looked from Colin, of whom he knew most, to the mother with her thoughtful eyes, and to the gaunt gigantic friend who looked upon everything in a speculative way, of which the curate had an instinctive suspicion. To-day Colin's visitor was more instructive and hortatory than was at all usual for him. He spoke of the mercy of God, which had so far brought the patient towards recovery, and of the motives for thankfulness; to which Mrs. Campbell assented with silent tears.

"Yes," said Colin; and there was a little pause that surprised the curate. "It is comfortable to be better," said the patient; "but it would be more than comfortable if one could but know, if one could but guess, what meaning God has in it all. There is Frankland downstairs with his cousin, quite well," said Colin. "I wonder does he ever ask himself why? When one is on the wrong side of the contrast, one feels it more, I suppose." The curate had passed Harry Frankland before he came upstairs, and had, perhaps, been conscious in his own mind of a momentary personal comparison and passing wonder, even at the difference

between his own lot and that of the heir of Wodensbourne. But he had thought the idea a bad one, and crushed it at once; and Colin's fancy, though more justifiable, was of the same description, and demanded instant extinction.

"You don't grudge him his good fortune, I am sure; and then we know there must be inequalities in this life," said the curate. "It is very mysterious, but nothing goes without compensation; and then we must always remember that 'whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,'" said the good clergyman. "You are young to have so much suffering; but you can always take comfort in that."

"Then you mean me to think that God does not love Harry Frankland," said Colin, "and makes a favourite of me in this gloomy way? Do you really think so?—for I cannot be of that opinion, for my part."

"My dear Mr. Campbell," said the curate, "I am very much grieved to hear you speaking like this. Did not God give up His own Son to sufferings of which we have no conception? Did not He endure——"

"It was for a cause," said Colin. The young man's voice fell, and the former bitterness came back upon him. "He suffered for the best reason, and knew why; but we are in the dark, and know nothing; why is it? One with all the blessings of life—another stripped, impoverished, brought to the depths, and no reason in it, no cause, no good," said Colin, in the momentary outcry of his wonder and passion. He was interrupted, but not by words of sacred consolation. Lauderdale was sitting behind, out of the way, humming to himself, in a kind of rude chant, out of a book he held in his hand. Nobody had been taking any notice of him, for it was his way. Now his voice rose and broke in, in an uncouth swell of sound, not unharmonious with the rude verse—

> "Theirs not to reason why,
> Theirs not to make reply,
> Theirs but to do and die,"

said Lauderdale, with a break of strong emotion in his voice; and he got up and threw down the book, and came forward into the little circle. It was the first time that he had intimated by so much as a look his knowledge of anything perilous in Colin's illness. Now he came and stood opposite him, leaning his back against the wall. "Callant," he said, with a voice that sounded as if it were blown about and interrupted by a strong wind, "if I were on a campaign, the man I would envy would be him that was chosen by his general for the forlorn hope—him that went first, and met the wildest of the battle. Do you mean to tell me you're no ready to follow when He puts the colours in your hand?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was for about six weeks altogether that the Mistress of Ramore remained Sir Thomas Frankland's guest. For half of that time Lauderdale, too, tall, and gaunt, and grim, strode daily over the threshold of Wodensbourne. He never broke bread, as he himself expressed it, nor made the slightest claim upon the hospitality of the stranger's house. On the contrary, he declined steadily every advance of friendship that was made to him with a curious Scotch pride, extremely natural to him, but odd to contemplate from the point of view at which the Franklands stood. They asked him to dinner or to lunch as they would have asked any other stranger who happened to come in their way; but Lauderdale was far too self-conscious to accept such overtures. He had come uninvited, an undesired, perhaps unwelcome, visitor; but not for the world would the philosopher have taken advantage of his position, as Colin's friend, to procure himself even the comfort of a meal. Not if he had been starving would he have shared Colin's dinner or accepted the seat offered him at the luxurious table below. "Na, na! I came without asking," said Lauderdale; "when they bid me to their feasts it's no for your sake, callant, or for my sake, but for their own sakes —for good breeding, and good manners, and not to be uncivil. To force a man to give you your dinner out of civility is every bit as shabby an action as to steal it. I'm no the man to sorn on Sir Thomas for short time or long." And, in pursuance of this whimsical idea of independence, Lauderdale went back every evening along the dark country lanes to the little room he had

rented in the village, and subdued his reluctant Scotch appetite to the messes of bacon and beans he found there—which was as severe a test of friendship as could have been imposed upon him. He was not accustomed to fare very sumptuously at home; but the fare of an English cottager is, if more costly, at least as distasteful to an untravelled Scotch appetite as the native porridge and broth of a Scotch peasant could be to his neighbour over the Tweed. The greasy meal filled Lauderdale with disgust, but it did not change his resolution. He lived like a Spartan on the bread which he could eat, and came back daily to his faithful tendance of the young companion who now represented to him almost all that he loved in the world. Colin grew better during these weeks. The air of home which his mother brought with her, the familiar discussions and philosophies with which Lauderdale filled the weary time, gave him a connecting link once more with the old life. And the new life again rose before Colin, fresh, and solemn, and glorious. Painfully and sharply he had been delivered from his delusions—those innocent delusions which were virtues. He began to see that, if indeed there ever was a woman in the world for whom it was worth a man's while to sacrifice his existence and individuality, Miss Matty, of all women, was not she. And after this divergence out of his true path, after this cloud that had come over him, and which once looked as though it might swallow him up, it is not to be described how beautiful his own young life looked to Colin, when it seemed to himself that he was coming back to it, and was about to enter once more upon his natural career.

"I wonder how Macdonald will get on at Baliol," he said; "of course he'll get the scholarship. It's no use regretting what cannot be helped; but when a man takes the wrong turning once in his life, do you think he can get into the right road again?" said Colin. He had scarcely spoken the words when a smile gradually stealing over his face, faint and soft like the rising of

the moon, intimated to his companions that he had already answered himself. Not only so, but that the elasticity of his youth had delivered Colin from all heavier apprehensions. He was not afraid of the wrong turning he had taken. He was but playing with the question in a kind of tender wantonness. Neither his health nor his lost opportunity gave him much trouble. The tide of life had risen in his heart, and again everything seemed possible; and, such being the case, he trifled pleasantly with the dead doubts which existed no longer. "There is a tide in the affairs of men," Colin said to himself, smiling over it; and the two people who were looking at him, whose hearts and whose eyes were studying every change in his face, saw that a new era had begun, and did not know whether to exchange looks of gratulation or to betake themselves to the silence and darkness to shed tears of despair over the false hope.

"When a callant goes a step astray, you mean," said Lauderdale, with a harshness in his voice which sounded contemptuous to Colin—"goes out of his way a step to gather a flower or the like,—a man that takes a wrong turn is altogether a false eemage. Everything in this world is awfu' mysterious," said the philosopher. "I'm no clear in my mind about that wrong turning. According to some theories there's no such thing in existence. 'All things work together for good.' I would like to know what was in Paul's head when he wrote down that. No to enter into the question of inspiration, the opinion of a man like him is aye worth having; but it's an awfu' mysterious saying to me."

"Eh, but it's true," said the Mistress; "you're no to throw ony of your doubts upon Providence. I'll no say but what it's a hard struggle whiles; but, if God doesna ken best—if He's not the wisest and the kindest—I would rather, for my part, come to an end without ony more ado about it. I'm no wanting to live, either in earth or heaven, if there's ony doubts about Him."

"That's aye the way with women," said Lauderdale, reflectively. "They've nae patience for a philosophical question. But the practical argument is no doubt awfu' powerful, and I can say nothing against it. I'm greatly of the same way o' thinking myself. Life's no worth having on less terms; but at the same time—"

"I was speaking only of the Baliol Scholarship," said Colin, with a momentary pettishness; "you are more abstruse than ever, Lauderdale. If there should happen to be another vacancy next year, do you think I've injured myself by neglecting this one? I never felt more disposed for work," said the young man, raising himself out of his chair. It said a great deal for his returning strength that the two anxious spectators allowed him to get up and walk to the window without offering any assistance. The evening was just falling, and Colin looked out upon a grey landscape of leafless trees and misty flats, over which the shadows were gathering. He came back again with a little exclamation of impatience. "I hate these dull levels," said the restless invalid; "the earth and the skies are silent here, and have nothing to say. Mother, why do we not go home?" He stood before her for a moment in the twilight, looking, in his diminished bulk and apparently increased height, like a shadow of what he was. Then he threw himself back in his chair with an impatience partly assumed to conceal the weakness of which he was painfully sensible. "Let us go to-morrow," said Colin, closing his eyes. He was in the state of weakness which feels every contradiction an injury, and already had been more ruffled in spirit than he cared to acknowledge, by the diversion of the talk from his own individual concerns to a general question so large and so serious. He lay back in his chair, with his eyes closed, and those clouds of brown hair of which his mother was so proud hanging heavily over the forehead which, when it was visible, looked so pale and

worn out of its glory of youth. The colour of day had all gone out of the whispering, solemn twilight; and, when the Mistress looked at the face before her, pale, with all its outlines rigid in the grey light, and its eyes closed, it was not wonderful that a shiver went through her heart.

"That was just what I had to speak about, Colin, my man," said Mrs. Campbell, nerving herself for the task before her. "I see no reason myself against it, for I've aye had a great confidence in native air; but your grand doctor that was brought down from London—"

"Do not say anything more. I shall not stay here, mother; it is impossible. I am throwing away my life," cried Colin, hastily, not waiting to hear her out. "Anybody can teach that boy. As for the Franklands, I have done enough for them. They have no right to detain me. We will go to-morrow," the young man repeated with the petulance of his weakness; to which Mrs. Campbell did not know how to reply.

"But, Colin, my man," said the Mistress, after a pause of perplexity, "it's no *that* I'm meaning. Spring's aye sweet, and its sweet aboon a' in your ain place, when ye ken every corner to look for a primrose in. I said that to the doctor, Colin, but he wasna of my opinion. A' that was in his mind was the east wind (no that there's much o' that in our countryside, but thae English canna tell one airt from another) and the soft weather; and I couldna say but what it was whiles damp," said the candid woman; "and the short and the long is, that he said you were to gang south and no north. If it wasna for your health's sake, which keeps folk anxious, it would sound ower grand to be possible," she continued, with a wistful smile, "and awfu' proud I would be to think of my laddie in Italy—"

"In Italy!" said Colin, with a cry of excitement and surprise; and then they both stopped short, and he looked in his mother's eyes, which would not meet his, and which he could

see, hard as she struggled to keep them unseen, were wet and shining with tears. "People are sent to Italy to die," said the young man. "I suppose that is what the doctor thinks?—and that is your opinion, my poor mother?—and Lauderdale thinks so too? Don't say No, no; I can see it in your eyes."

"Oh, Colin, dinna say that! dinna break my heart!" cried the Mistress. "I'm telling you every word the doctor said. He said it would be better for you in the future; better for your strength, and for getting free of danger in the many hard winters—dour Scotch winters, frost, and snow, and stormy weather, and you your duty to mind night and day—" She made a little pause to get her breath, and smiled upon Colin, and went on hastily, lest she should break down before all was said. "In the mony hard winters that you have to look forward to—the lang life that's to come—"

"Lauderdale," said Colin, out of the darkness, "do you hear her saying what she thinks is deception and falsehood. My mother is obliged to tell me the doctor's lie; but it stumbles on her lips. That is not how she would speak of herself. She would say—"

"Callant, hold your peace," said Lauderdale. His voice was so harsh and strange, that it jarred in the air, and he rose up with a sudden movement, rising like a tower into the twilight, through which the pleasant reflections from the fire sparkled and played as lightly as if the talk had been all of pleasure. "Be silent, sir," cried Colin's friend. "How dare you say to me that any word but truth can come out of the Mistress's lips? How dare ye—" But here Lauderdale himself came to a sudden pause. He went to the window, as Colin had done, and then came quickly back again. "Because we're a wee concerned and anxious about him, he thinks he may say what he likes," said the philosopher, with a strange, short laugh. "It's the way with such callants. They're kings, and give the laws to us that

ken better. You may say what you like, Colin, but you must not name anything that's no true with your mother's name."

It is strange to feel that you are going to die. It is stranger still to see your friends profoundly conscious of the awful news they have to convey, painfully making light of it, and trying to look as if they meant nothing. Colin perceived the signification of his mother's pathetic smiles, of his friend's impatience, of the vigilant watch they kept upon him. He saw that, if perhaps her love kept a desperate spark of hope alight in the Mistress's heart, it *was* desperate, and she put no confidence in it. All this he perceived, with the rapid and sudden perception which comes at such a crisis. Perhaps for a moment the blood went back upon his heart with a suffocating sense of danger, against which he could make no stand, and of an inevitable approaching fate which he could not avoid or flee from. The next minute he laughed aloud. The sound of his laughter was strange and terrible to his companions. The Mistress took her boy's hand and caressed it, and spoke to him in the soothing words of his childhood. "Colin, my man—Colin, my bonnie man!" said the mother whose heart was breaking. She thought his laugh sounded like defiance of God, defiance of the approaching doom; and such a fear was worse even than the dread of losing him. She kept his reluctant fingers in hers, holding him fast to the faith and resignation of his home. As for Lauderdale, he went away out of sight, struggling with a hard sob which all his strength could not restrain; and it was in the silence of this moment that Colin's laugh, more faintly, more softly, with a playful sound that went to their hearts, echoed again into the room.

"Don't hold me, mother," he said; "I could not run away from you if I would. You think I don't take my discovery as I ought to do? If it is true," said Colin, grasping his mother's hand, "you will have time enough to be miserable about me after; let

us be happy as long as we can. But I don't think it is true. I have died and come alive again. I am not going to die any more just now," said Colin, with a smile which was more than his mother could bear; and his eyes were so fixed upon her, that her efforts to swallow the climbing sorrow in her throat were such as consumed her strength. But even then it was of him and not herself that she thought. "I wasna meaning—I wasna saying—" she tried to articulate in her broken voice; and then at intervals, "A' can be borne—a' can be borne—that doesna go against the will of God. Oh Colin, my ain laddie! we maun a' die; but we must not rebel against Him," cried the Mistress. A little more, and even she, though long-enduring as love could make her, must have reached the limits of her strength; but Colin, strangely enough, was no way disposed for solemnity, nor for seriousness. He was at the height of the rebound, and disposed to carry his nurses with him to that smiling mountain-top from which death and sorrow had dispersed like so many mists and clouds.

"Come to the window, and look out," said Colin; "take my arm, mother; it feels natural to have you on my arm. Look here—there are neither hills nor water, but there are always stars about. I don't mean to be discouraged," said the young man. He had to lean against the window to support himself; but, all the same, he supported her, keeping fast hold of the hand on his arm. "I don't mean to be discouraged," said Colin, "nor to let you be discouraged. I have been in the valley of the shadow of death, but I have come out again. It does not matter to me what the doctor says, or what Lauderdale says, or any other of my natural enemies. You and I, mother, know better," he said; "I am not going to die."

The two stood at the window, looking up to the faint stars, two faces cast in the same mould—one distraught with a struggling of hope against knowledge, against experience;

the other radiant with a smile of youth. "I am not quite able to walk over the Alps, at present," said Colin, leading the Mistress back to her chair; "but, for all that, let us go to Italy since the doctor says so. And, Lauderdale, come out of the dark, and light the candles, and don't talk any more nonsense. We are going to have a consultation about the ways and means. I don't know how it is to be done," said Colin, gaily, "since we have not a penny, nor has anybody belonging to us; but still, since you say so, mother, and the doctor, and Lauderdale——"

The Mistress, all trembling and agitated, rose at this moment to help Lauderdale, who had come forward without saying anything, to do the patient's bidding. "You'll no be angry?" said Mrs. Campbell, under her breath; "it's a' his spirits; he means nothing but love and kindness." Lauderdale met her eye with a countenance almost as much disturbed as her own.

"Me angry?" said Colin's friend; "he might have my head for a football, if that would please him." The words were said in an undertone which sounded like a suppressed growl; and as such Colin took this little clandestine exchange of confidence.

"Is he grumbling, mother?" said the object of their cares. "Never mind; he likes to grumble. Now come to the fire, both of you, and talk. They are oracles, these great doctors; they tell you what you are to do without telling you how to do it. Must I go to Italy in a balloon?" said Colin. "After all, if it were possible, it would be worth being ill for," said the young man, with a sudden illumination in his eyes. He took the management of affairs into his own hands for the evening, and pointed out to them where they were to sit with the despotism of an invalid. "Now we look comfortable," said Colin, "and are prepared to listen to suggestions. Lauderdale, your mind is speculative; do you begin."

It was thus that Colin defeated the gathering dread and

anguish which, even in the face of his apparent recovery, closed more and more darkly round him; and, as what he did and said did not arise from any set purpose or conscious intention, but was a mere outburst of instinctive feeling, it had a certain inevitable effect upon his auditors, who brightened up, in spite of themselves and their convictions, under his influence. When Colin laughed, instead of feeling inclined to sob or groan over him, even Lauderdale, after a while, cleared up too into a doubtful smile; and, as for the Mistress, her boy's confidence came to her like a special revelation. She saw it was not assumed, and her heart rose. "When a young creature's appointed to be taken, the Lord gives him warning," she said in secret; "but my Colin has nae message in himself," and her tender soul was cheered by the visionary consolation. It was under the same exhilarating influence that Lauderdale spoke.

"I've given up my situation," he said. "No but what it was a very honourable situation, and no badly remunerated, but a man tires of everything that's aye the same day by day. I've been working hard a' my life; and it's in the nature of man to be craving. I'm going to Eetaly for my own hand," said Lauderdale; "no on your account, callant. I've had enough of the prose, and now's the time for a bit poetry. No that I undertake to write verses, like you. If he has not me to take care of him, he'll flee into print," said the philosopher, reflectively. It would be a terrible shock to me to see our first prizeman, the most distinguished student, as the Principal himself said, coming out in a book with lines to Eetaly, and verses about vineyards and oranges. That kind of thing is a' very well for the callants at Oxford and Cambridge, but there's something more expected from one of *us*," said Lauderdale. "I'm going to Eetaly, as I tell you, callant, as long as there's a glimmer of something like youth left in me, to get a bit poetry into my life. You and me will take our knapsacks on our backs and go

off together. I have a trifle in the bank; a hundred pounds—or maybe mair: I couldn't say as to a shilling or two. If I'm speculative, as you say, I'm no without a turn for the practical," he continued with some pride; "and everything's awfu' cheap when you know how to manage. This curate callant—he has not a great deal of sense, nor ony philosophical judgment, that I can see; and, as for theology, he doesna understand what it means; but he does not seem to me to be deficient in other organs," said the impartial observer, "such as the heart, for example; and he's been about the world, and understands about inns and things. Every living creature has its use in this life. I wouldna say he was good for very much in the way of direct teaching from the pulpit, but he's been awfu' instructive to me."

"And you mean me to save my life at your cost?" said Colin. "This is what I have come to; at your cost or at my father's, or by somebody's charity? No; I'll go home and sit in an easy-chair, like poor Hugh Carlyle; and, mother, you'll take care ——."

When the sick man's fitful spirits thus yielded again his mother was near to soothe him into steadier courage. Again she held his hands, and said, "Colin, my man—Colin, my bonnie man!" with the voice of his childhood. "You'll come back hale and strong to pay a'body back the trouble," said the Mistress, while Lauderdale proceeded unmoved, without seeming to hear what Colin said.

"They're a mystery to me, thae English priests," said the meditative Scotchman. "They're not to call ignorant, in the general sense, but they're awfu' simple in their ways. To think of a man in possession of his faculties reading a verse or maybe a chapter out of the Bible, which is very near as mysterious as life itself to the like of me, and then discoursing about the Church and the Lessons appointed for this day or that. It's a

grand tether, that Prayer-Book, though. Yon kind of callant, so long as he keeps by that, he's safe in a kind of a way; but he knows nothing about what's doing outside his printed walls, and, when he hears suddenly a' the stir that's in the world, he loses his head, and invents a' the old heresies over again. But he's awful instructive, as I was saying, in the article of inns and steamboats. Not to say that he's a grand Italian scholar, as far as I can understand, and reads Dante in the original. It's a wonderful thought to realize the like of that innocent reading Dante. You and me, Colin," said Lauderdale, with a sudden glow in his eyes, "will take the poets by the hand for once in our lives. What you were saying about cost was a wonderful sensible saying for you. When the siller's done we'll work our way home; it's a pity you have no voice to speak of, and I canna play the—guitar is't they call it?" said the philosopher, with a quaint grimace. He was contemptuous of the lighter arts, as was natural to his race and habits, and once more Colin's laugh sounded gaily through the room, which, for many weeks, had known little laughter. They discussed the whole matter, half playfully, half seriously, as they sat over the fire, growing eager about it as they went on. Lauderdale's hundred pounds "or maybe mair" was the careful hoarding of years. He had saved it as poor Scotchmen are reported to save, by minute economies, unsuspected by richer men. But he was ready to spend his little fortune with the composure of a millionaire. "And myself after it, if that would make it more effectual," he said to himself, as he went back in the darkness to his little lodging in the village. Let it not be supposed, however, that any idea of self-sacrifice was in the mind of Lauderdale. On the contrary, he contemplated this one possible magnificence of his life with a glow of secret satisfaction and delight. He was willing to expend it all upon Colin, if not to save him, at least to please him. That was *his*

pleasure, the highest gratification of which he was capable in the circumstances. He made his plans with the liberality of a prince, without thinking twice about the matter—though it was all the wealth he had in the world which he was about to lavish freely for Colin's sake.

"I don't mean to take Lauderdale's money, but we'll arrange it somehow," said Colin; "and then for the hard winters you speak of, mother, and the labour night and day." He sent her away with a smile; but, when he had closed the door of his own apartment, which now at length he was well enough to have to himself without the attendance of any nurse, the light went out of the young man's face. After his kind attendants were both gone, he sat down and began to think; things did not look so serene, so certain, so infallible when he was alone. He began to think, What if after all the doctor might be right? What if it were death and not life that was written against his name? The thought brought a little thrill to Colin's heart, and then he set himself to contemplate the possibility. His faith was shadowy in details, like that of most people; his ideas about heaven had shifted and grown confused from the first vague vision of beatitude, the crowns, and palms, and celestial harps of childhood. What was that other existence into which, in the fulness of his youth, he might be transported ere he was aware? *There* at least must be the solution of all the difficulties that crazed the minds of men; *there* at least, nearer to God, there must be increase of faculty, elevation of soul. Colin looked it in the face, and the Unknown did not appal him; but through the silence he seemed already to hear the cry of anguish which would go up from one homely house under the unanswering skies. It had been his home all his life: what would it be to him in the event of that change, which was death, but not destruction? Must he look down from afar off, from some cold, cruel distance, upon the sorrow of his friends, himself being happy beyond reach, bearing

no share in the burden? Or might he, according to a still more painful imagination, be with them, beside them, but unable by word or look, by breath or touch, to lift aside even for a moment the awful veil, transparent to him, but to them heavy and dark as night, which drops between the living and the dead? It was when his thoughts came to this point, that Colin withdrew, faint and sick at heart, from the hopeless inquiry. He went to rest, saying his prayers as he said them at his mother's knee, for Jesus' sake. Heaven and earth swam in confused visions round the brain which was dizzy with the encounter of things too mysterious, too dark to be fathomed. The only thing in Earth or Heaven of which there seemed to be any certainty was the sole Existence which united both, in whose name Colin said his prayers.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Miss Matty Frankland all this time had not been without her trials. They were trials as unlike Colin's as possible, but not without some weight and poignancy of their own, such as might naturally belong to the secondary heartaches of a woman who was far from being destitute either of sense or feeling, and yet was at the same time a little woman of the world. In the first place, she was greatly aggravated that Harry, who on the whole seemed to be her fate, an inevitable necessity, should allow himself to be picked out of a canal at the hazard of another man's life. Harry was, on the whole, a very good fellow, and was not apt to fall into an inferior place among his equals, or show himself less manful, courageous, or fortunate than other people. But it wounded Matty's pride intensely to think that she might have to marry a man whose life had been twice saved, all the more as it was not a fault with which he could be reasonably upbraided. And then, being a woman, it was impossible for her to refrain from a little natural involuntary hero-worship of the other; who was not only the hero of these adventures, but her own chivalrous adorer to boot—perhaps the only man in the world who had suffered his life to be seriously affected by her influence. Not only so; but at bottom Miss Matty was fond of Colin, and looked upon him with an affectionate, caressing regard, which was not love, but might very easily have borne the aspect of love by moments, especially when its object was in a position of special interest. Between these two sentiments the young lady was kept in a state of harass and worry, disadvantageous

both to her looks and her temper — a consciousness of which re-acted in its turn upon her feelings. She put it all down to Harry's score when, looking in her glass, she found herself paler than usual. "I wonder how he could be such an ass," she said to herself at such periods, with a form of expression unsuitable for a boudoir; and then her heart would melt towards his rival. There were even some moments in which she felt, or imagined she felt, the thraldom of society, and uttered to herself sighs and sneers, half false and half true, about the "gilded chains," &c. which bound her to make her appearance at Sir Thomas's dinner-party, and to take an active part in Lady Frankland's ball.

All this conflict of sentiment was conscious, which made matters worse: for all the time Matty was never quite clear of the idea that she was a humbug, and even in her truest impulse of feeling kept perpetually finding herself out. If Colin had been able to appear downstairs, her position would have been more and more embarrassing; as it was, she saw, as clearly as any one, that the intercourse which she had hitherto kept up with the tutor must absolutely come to an end now, when he had a claim so much stronger and more urgent upon the gratitude of the family. And, the more closely she perceived this, the more did Matty grudge the necessity of throwing aside the most graceful of all her playthings. Things might have gone on in the old way for long enough but for this most unnecessary and perplexing accident, which was entirely Harry's fault. Now she dared not any longer play with Colin's devotion, and yet was very reluctant to give up the young worshipper, who amused and interested and affected her more than any other in her train. With this in her mind, Miss Matty, as may be supposed, was a little fitful in her spirits, and felt herself, on the whole, an injured woman. The ordinary homage of the drawing-room felt stale and unprofitable after Colin's poetic worship; and the wooing of Harry, who felt he had a right to her, and conducted himself accordingly, made

the contrast all the more distinct. And in her heart, deep down beyond all impulses of vanity, there lay a woman's pity for the sufferer, a woman's grateful but remorseful admiration for the man who had given in exchange for all her false coin a most unquestionable heart.

It will thus be apparent that Matty did not suspect the change that had come over Colin's sentiments; perhaps she could not by any effort of her understanding have realized the sudden revolution which these few weeks had worked in his mind. She would have been humbled, wounded, perhaps angry, had she known of his disenchantment. But, in her ignorance, a certain yearning was in the young lady's mind. She was not reconciled to give him up; she wanted to see him again—even, so mingled were her sentiments, to try her power upon him again, though it could only be to give him pain. Altogether, the business was complicated to an incredible extent in the mind of Matty, and she had not an idea of the simple manner in which Colin had cut the knot and escaped out of all its entanglements. When the accident was discussed downstairs the remarks of the general company were insufferable to the girl who knew more about Colin than any one else did; and the sharpness of her criticism upon their talk confounded even Lady Frankland, whose powers of observation were not rapid. "My dear, you seem to be losing your temper," said the astonished aunt; and the idea gave Lady Frankland a little trouble. "A woman who loses her temper will never do for Harry," she said in confidence to Sir Thomas. "And, poor fellow, he is very ready to take offence since this unfortunate accident. I am sure I am quite willing to acknowledge how much we owe to Mr. Campbell; but it is very odd that nothing has ever happened to Harry except in his company," said the aggrieved mother. Sir Thomas, for his part, was more reasonable.

"A very lucky thing for Harry," said the baronet. "Nobody

else would have gone into that canal after him. I can't conceive how Harry could be such a confounded ass," Sir Thomas added, with a mortified air. "But as for Campbell, poor fellow, anything that I can do for him—. By Jove, Mary, if he were to die I should never forgive myself." On the whole, it will be seen that the agitations occasioned by Colin were not confined to his own chamber. As for Harry, he kept silence on the subject, but did not the less feel the inferior position in which his misfortune had left him. He was grateful so far, that, if he could have persuaded Colin to accept any recompense, or done him any overwhelming favour, he would have gladly given that evidence of thankfulness. But, after the first shock of horror with which he heard of the tutor's danger, it is certain that the mortification of feeling that his life had been saved at the risk of another man's life, produced in young Frankland anything but a friendly sentiment. To accept so vast an obligation requires an amount of generosity of which Harry was not capable. The two young men were, indeed, placed in this singular relationship to each other, without the existence of a spark of sympathy between them. Not only was the mind of the saved in a sore and resentful, rather than a grateful and affectionate, state; but even the other, from whom more magnanimity might have been expected, had absolutely no pleasure in thinking that he had saved the life of a fellow-creature. That sweet satisfaction and approval of conscience which is said to attend acts of benevolence did not make itself felt in the bosom of Colin. He was rather irritated than gratified by the consciousness of having preserved Harry Frankland from a watery grave, as the apothecary said. The entire household was possessed by sensations utterly unlike those which it ought to have felt when, on the day succeeding his consultation with Lauderdale, Colin for the first time came down stairs. There were still some people in the house giving full occupation to Lady Frankland's powers of

hospitality, and Matty's of entertainment; but both the ladies heard in a minute or two after his appearance that Mr. Campbell had been seen going into the library. "Perhaps it would be best if you were to go and speak to him, Matty," said Lady Frankland. "There is no occasion for being too enthusiastic; but you may say that I am very much occupied, or I would have come myself to welcome him. Say anything that is proper, my dear, and I will try and induce Harry to go and shake hands, and make his acknowledgments. Men have such a horror of making a fuss," said the perplexed mother. As for Matty, she went upon her errand with eagerness and a little agitation. Colin was in the library, seated at the table beside Sir Thomas, when she went in. The light was shining full upon him, and it did not subdue the beatings of Matty's contradictory little heart to see how changed he was, and out of caves how deep those eyes looked which had taken new meanings unintelligible to her. She had been, in her secret heart, a little proud of understanding Colin's eyes; and it was humiliating to see the new significations which they had come to during his sickness, and to which she had no clue. Sir Thomas was speaking when she came in; so Matty said nothing, but came and stood by him for a moment, and gave her hand to Colin. When their eyes met, they were both somewhat excited by it, though they were not in love with each other; and then Matty drew a chair to the other side of the table, and looked remorsefully, pitifully, tenderly, on the man whom she supposed her lover. She was surprised that he did not seek her eye, or show himself alive to all her movements, as he used to do; and at that moment, for the first time, it occurred to Matty to wonder whether the absolute possession of Colin's heart might not be worth a sacrifice. She was tired of Harry, and, to tell the truth, of most other people just then. And the sight of this youth—who was younger than she was, who was so much more ignorant and less

experienced than she, and who had not an idea in his head about settlements and establishments, but entertained visions of an impossible life, with incomprehensible aims and meanings in it,—had a wonderfully sudden effect upon her. For that instant Matty was violently tempted;—that is to say, she took it into consideration as actually a question worth thinking of, whether it might not be practicable to accept Colin's devotion, and push him on in the world, and make something of him. She entertained the idea all the more, strangely enough, because she saw none of the old pleadings in Colin's eyes.

"I hope you will never doubt our gratitude, Campbell," said Sir Thomas. "I understand that the doctor has said you must not remain in this climate. Of course you must spend the spring in Nice, or somewhere. It's charming scenery thereabouts. You'll get better directly you get into the air. And in summer, you know, there's no place so good as England—you must come back here. As for expenses, you shall have a travelling allowance over your salary. Don't say anything; money can never repay——"

"As long as I was Charley's tutor," said Colin, "money was natural. Pardon me—I can't help the change of circumstances; there is no bond between us now—only kindness," said the young man with an effort. "You have all been very good to me since I fell ill. I came to thank you, and to say I must give up——"

"Yes, yes," said Sir Thomas; "but you can't imagine that I will let you suffer for your exertions on my son's behalf, and for the regard you have shown to my family?"

"I wish you would understand," said Colin, with vexation. "I have explained to Lady Frankland more than once. It may seem rude to say so, but there was no regard for your family involved in that act, at least. I was the only one of the party who saw that your son had gone down. I had no wish to go down

after him—I can't say I had any impulse, even; but I had seen him, and I should have felt like his murderer if I had not attempted to save him. I am aware it is an ungracious thing to say, but I cannot accept praise which I don't deserve," said Colin, his weakness bringing a hot sudden colour over his face; and then he stopped short, and looked at Sir Thomas, who was perplexed by this interruption, and did not quite know how to shape his reply.

"Well, well," said the baronet; "I don't exactly understand you, and I daresay you don't understand yourself. Most people that are capable of doing a brave action give queer explanations of it. That's what you mean, I suppose. No fellow that's worth anything pretends to fine motives, and so forth. You did it because you could not help it. But that does not interfere with my gratitude. When you are ready to go, you will find a credit opened for you at my bankers, and we must see about letters of introduction, and all that; and I advise you, if you're going to Italy, to begin the language at once if you don't know it. Miss Matty used to chatter enough for six when we were there. I daresay she'd like nothing better than to teach you," said Sir Thomas. He was so much relieved by the possibility of turning over his difficult visitor upon Matty, that he forgot the disadvantages of such a proposal. He got up, delighted to escape and to avoid any further remonstrance, and held out his hand to Colin. "Delighted to see you downstairs again," said the baronet; "and I hope you'll bring your friend to dinner with you to-night. Good-bye just now; I have, unfortunately, an engagement—"

"Good-bye," said Colin. "I will write to you all about it." And so the good-hearted Squire went away, thinking everything was settled. After that it was very strange for the two who had been so much together to find themselves again in the same room, and alone. As for Colin, he did not well know what to say.

Almost the last time he had been by Matty's side without any witnesses, was the time when he concluded that it was only his life that he was throwing away for her sake. Since that time what a wonderful change had passed over him! The idea that he had thought her smile, a glance of her eye, worth such a costly sacrifice, annoyed Colin. But still her presence sent a little thrill through him when they were left alone together. And, as for Miss Matty, there was some anxiety in her face as she looked at him. What did he mean? was he taking a desperate resolution to declare his sentiments? or what other reason could there be for his unusual silence? for it never occurred to her to attribute it to its true cause.

"My uncle thinks you have consented to his plan," said Matty; "but I suppose I know what your face means better than he does. Why are you so hard upon us, I wonder? I know well enough that Harry and you never took to each other; but you used to like the rest of us—or, at least, I thought so," said the little siren. She gave one of her pretty glances at him under her eyelashes, and Colin looked at her across the table candidly, without any disguise. Alas! he had seen her throw that same glance at various other persons, while he stood in the corner of the drawing-room observing everything; and the familiar artillery this time had no effect.

"I have the greatest respect for everybody at Wodensbourne," said Colin; "you did me only justice in thinking so. You have all been very good to me."

"I did not say anything about respect," said Miss Matty, with pouting lips. "We used to be friends, or, at least, I thought so. I never imagined we were to break off into respect so suddenly. I am sure I wish Harry had been a hundred miles away when he came to disturb us all," said the disarmed enchantress. She saw affairs were in the most critical state, and her words were so far true that she could have expressed her feelings best at that

moment by an honest fit of crying. As this was impracticable, Miss Matty tried less urgent measures. "We have caused you nothing but suffering and vexation," said the young lady, dropping her voice and fixing her eyes upon the pattern of the table-cover, which she began to trace with her finger. "I do not wonder that we have become disagreeable to you. But you should not condemn the innocent with the guilty," said Miss Matty, looking suddenly up into his eyes. A touch of agitation, the slightest possible, gave interest to the face on which Colin was looking; and perhaps all the time he had known her she had never so nearly approached being beautiful; as certainly, all the time, she had never so narrowly escaped being true. If things had been with Colin as they once were, the probability is that, moved by her emotion, the whole story of his love would have poured forth at this emergency; and, had it done so, there is a possibility that Matty, carried away by the impulse of the moment, might have awoke next morning the affianced wife of the farmer's son of Ramore.

Providence, however, was kinder to the pair. Colin sat on the other side of the table, and perceived that she was putting her little delicate probe into his wound. He thought he saw all the asides and stage directions, and looked at her with a curious, vicarious sense of shame. Colin, indeed, in his new enlightenment, was hard upon Matty. He thought it was all because she would not give up her power over the victim, whom she intended only to torture, that she had thus taken the trouble to re-open the ended intercourse. He could no more have believed that at this moment, while he was looking at her, such a thing was possible as that Matty might have accepted his love, and pledged her life to him, than he could have believed the wildest nonsense that was ever written in a fairy tale. So the moments passed, while the ignorant mortal sat on the opposite side of the table—which was a very fortunate thing for both

parties. Nevertheless, it was with a certain sense of contempt for him, as, after all, only an ordinary blind male creature, unconscious of his opportunities, mingled with a thrill of excitement, on her own part, natural to a woman who had just escaped a great danger, that Miss Matty listened to what Colin had to say.

"There is neither guilty nor innocent that I know of," said Colin; "you have all been very kind to me. It is very good of you to take the pains to understand me. I don't mean to take advantage of Sir Thomas Frankland's kindness; but I am not such a churl as to fling it back in his teeth as if it was pride alone that made me refuse it. It is not pride alone," said Colin, growing red, "but a sense of justice; for what I have done has been done by accident. I will write and explain to Sir Thomas what I mean."

"Write and explain?" said Matty. "You have twice said you would write. Do you mean that you are going away?"

"As soon as it is possible," said Colin; and then he perceived that he was speaking with rude distinctness. "Indeed, I have been taking advantage of your uncle's kindness too long. I have been a useless member of the household for six weeks at least. Yes, I must go away."

"You speak very calmly," said Matty. She was a little flushed, and there were tears in her eyes. If they had been real tears she would have hidden them carefully, but as they were only half real she had no objection to let Colin see that she was concealing them. "You are very composed about it, Mr. Campbell. One would think you were going away from a place distasteful to you; or, at least, which you were totally indifferent about. I daresay that is all very right and proper; but I have a good memory, and it appears rather strange to me."

It was altogether a trying situation for Colin. If she had been able to seduce him into a little recrimination she might

have succeeded in dragging the reluctant captive back again into her toils; which, having by this time entirely recovered her senses, was all Miss Matty wanted. Her downcast, tearful eyes, the faltering in her voice, were wonderfully powerful weapons, which the young man was unable to combat by means of mere indifference. Colin, however, being a man of impulses, was never to be calculated on beforehand for any particular line of conduct; and, on the present occasion, he entirely overleaped Miss Matty's bounds.

"Yes, it is strange," said Colin. "Perhaps nothing but the sight of death, who has been staring into my eyes for some time, could have shown me the true state of affairs. I have uttered a great deal of nonsense since I came to Wodensbourne, and you—have listened to it, Miss Frankland; and, perhaps, rather enjoyed seeing my tortures and my delights. But nothing could come of that; and when death hangs on behind everything but love flies before him," said Colin. "It was pleasant sport while it lasted; but everything, except love, comes to an end."

"Except love," said Miss Matty. She was terribly piqued and mortified on the surface, and a little humbled and sorrowful within. She had a sense, too, that, for one moment, at the beginning of this interview, she had almost been capable of that sentiment which Colin exalted so highly: and that, consequently, he did her injustice in speaking of it as something with which she had nothing to do. "I remember hearing you talk of *that* sometimes, in the midst of what you call nonsense now. If you did not understand yourself, you can't expect that I should have understood you," she went on. To tell the truth, Miss Matty was very near crying. She had experienced the usual injustice of human affairs, and been punished for her vanity just at the moment when she was inclined to do better; and her heart cried out against such cruel usage. This time, however, she kept her tears quite in subjection and did not show them

but only repeated, "You could not expect that I should understand you, if you did not understand yourself."

"No; that is true at least," said Colin, with eyes that strayed beyond her, and had gone off into other regions unknown to Matty. This which had piqued her even at the height of their alliance gave her an excuse for her anger now.

"And when you go off into sentiment I never understand you," said the young lady. "I will *levo l'incomodo*, as the Italians say. That shall be your first lesson in the language which my uncle says I am to teach you," and she turned away with a glance half-spiteful, half-wistful, which had more effect upon Colin than a world of words. He got up to open the door for her, weak as he was, and took her hand and kissed it as she went away. Then Colin took himself laboriously upstairs, having done his day's work. And so unreasonable was the young man, that Matty's last glance filled his heart with gentler thoughts of the world in general, though he was not in love any longer. "I was not such a fool after all," he said to himself; which was a great consolation. As for Matty, she cried heartily when she got to her room, and felt as if she had lost something. Nor did she recover until after luncheon, when some people came to call, and it was her duty to be entertaining, and relieve Lady Frankland. "I hope you said everything that was proper to Mr. Campbell, my dear," said the lady of the house when lunch was over. And so that chapter came to an end.

CHAPTER XXV.

After this interview it was strange to meet again the little committee upstairs, and resume the consideration of ways and means, which Sir Thomas would have settled so summarily. Colin could not help thinking of the difference with a little amusement. He was young enough to be able to dismiss entirely the grave thoughts of the previous night, feeling in his elastic, youthful mind, something of the fresh influence of the morning, or at least—for Colin had found out that the wind was easterly, a thing totally indifferent to him in old times—of the sentiment of the morning, which, so long as heart and courage are unbroken, renews the thoughts and hopes. Money was a necessary evil, to Colin's thinking. So long as there happened to be enough of it for necessary purposes, he was capable of laughing at the contrast between his own utter impecuniosity and the wealth which was only important for sake of the things that could be done with it. Though he was Scotch, and of a careful, money-making race, this was as yet the aspect which money bore to the young man. He laughed as he leaned back in his easy chair.

"What Lauderdale makes up by working for years, and what we can't make up by any amount of working, Sir Thomas does with a scrape of his pen," said Colin. "Downstairs they need to take little thought about these matters, and up here a great deal of thought serves very little purpose. On the whole, it seems to me that it would be very good for our tempers and for our minds in general if we all had plenty of money," said the

young philosopher, still laughing. He was tolerably indifferent on the subject, and able to take it easily. While he spoke, his eye lighted on his mother's face, who was not regarding the matter by any means so lightly. Mrs. Campbell on the contrary was suffering under one of the greatest minor trials of a woman. She thought her son's life depended on this going to Italy, and to procure the means for it there was nothing on earth his mother would not have done. She would have undertaken joyfully the rudest and hardest labour that ever was undertaken by man. She would have put her hands, which indeed were not unaccustomed to work, to any kind of toil; but with this eager longing in her heart she knew at the same time that it was quite impossible for her to do anything by which she could earn those sacred and precious coins on which her boy's life depended. While Colin spoke, his mother was making painful calculations what she could save and spare, at least, if she could not earn. Colin stopped short when he looked at her; he could not laugh any longer. What was to him a matter of amusing speculation was to her life or death.

"There canna but be inequalities in this world," said the Mistress, her tender brows still puckered with their baffling calculations. "I'm no envious of ony grandeur, nor of taking my ease, nor of the pleasures of this life. We're awfu' happy at hame in our sma' way when a's weel with the bairns; but it's for their sakes, to get them a' that's good for them! Money's precious when it means health and life," said Mrs. Campbell with a sigh; "and it's awfu' hard upon a woman when she can do nothing for her ain, and them in need."

"I've known it hard upon mony a man," said Lauderdale; "there's little difference when it comes to that. But a hundred pounds," he continued, with a delightful consciousness of power and magnificence, "is not a bad sum to begin upon; before that's done, there will be time to think of more. It's none of

your business, callant, that I can see. If you'll no come with me, you must even stay behind. I've set my heart on a holiday. A man has little good of his existence when he does nothing but work and eat, and eat and work again, as I've been doing. I would like to take the play a while, and feel that I'm alive."

When the Mistress saw how Lauderdale stretched his long limbs on his chair, and how Colin's face brightened with the look, half sympathetic, half provocative, which usually marked the beginning of a long discussion, she went to the other end of the room for her work. It was Colin's linen which his mother was putting in order, and she was rather glad to withdraw to a distance, and retire within that refuge of needlework, which is a kind of sanctuary for a woman, and in which she could pursue undisturbed her own thoughts. After a while, though these discussions were much in Mrs. Campbell's way, and she was not disinclined in general to take part in them, she lost the thread of the conversation. The voices came to her in a kind of murmur, now and then chiming in with a chance word or two in the current of her own reflections. The atmosphere which surrounded the convalescent had never felt so hopeful as to-day, and the heart of the mother swelled with a sense of restoration, a trust in God's mercy which recently had been dull and faint within her. Restoration, recovery, deliverance—Nature grows humble, tender, and sweet under these influences of heaven. The Mistress's heart melted within her, repenting of all the hard thoughts she had been thinking, of all the complaints she had uttered. "It is good for me that I was afflicted," said the Psalmist; but it was not until his affliction was past that he could say so. Anguish and loss make no such confession. The heart, when it is breaking, has enough ado to refrain from accusing God of its misery, and it is only the inhumanity of human advisers that adjure it to make spiritual merchandize out of the hopelessness of its pain.

Matters were going on thus in Colin's chamber, where he and his friend sat talking; and the mother at the other end of the room carefully sewing on Colin's buttons, began to descend out of her heaven of thankfulness, and to be troubled with a pang of apprehension lest her husband should not see things in the same light as she did, but might, perhaps, demur to Colin's journey as an unwarrantable expense. People at Ramore did not seek such desperate remedies for failing health. Whenever a cherished one was ill, they were content to get "the best doctors," and do everything for him that household care and pains could do; but, failing that, the invalid succumbed into the easy chair, and, when domestic cherishing would serve the purpose no longer, into a submissive grave, without dreaming of those resources of the rich which might still have prolonged the fading life. Colin of Ramore was a kind father, but he was only a man, as the Mistress recollected, and apt to come to different conclusions from an anxious and trembling mother. Possibly he might think this great expense unnecessary, not to be thought of, an injustice to his other children; and the thought disturbed her reflections terribly, as she sat behind backs examining Colin's wardrobe. At all events, present duty prompted her to make everything sound and comfortable, that he might be ready to encounter the journey without any difficulty on that score; and, absorbed in these mingled cares and labours, she was folding up carefully the garments she had done with, and laying them before her in a snowy heap upon the table, when the curate knocked softly at the door. It was rather an odd scene for the young clergyman, who grew more and more puzzled by his Scotch acquaintances the more he saw of them, not knowing how to account for their quaint mixture of homeliness and intelligence, nor whether to address them politely as equals, or familiarly as inferiors. Mrs. Campbell came forward, when he opened the door, with her cordial smile and looks as gracious as if she had

been a duchess. "Come away, sir," said the farmer's wife; "we are aye real glad to see you," and then the Mistress stopped short, for Henry Frankland was behind the curate, and somehow the heir of Wodensbourne was not a favourite with Colin's mother. But her discontent lasted only a moment. "I canna bid ye welcome, Mr. Frankland, to your own house," said the diplomatical woman; "but if it was mine I would say I was glad to see you." This was how she got over the difficulty. But she followed the two young men towards the fire, where Colin had risen from his easy chair. She could but judge according to her knowledge, like other people; and she was a little afraid that the man who had taken his love from him who had hazarded his health and, probably, his life, would find little favour in Colin's eyes; and to be anything but courteous to a man who came to pay her a visit, even had he been her greatest enemy, was repugnant to her barbaric-princely Scotch ideas. She followed accordingly, to be at hand and put things straight, if they went wrong.

"Frankland was too late to see you to-day when you were downstairs; so he thought he would come up with me," said the curate, giving this graceful version of the fact that, dragged by himself and pursued by Lady Frankland, Harry had most reluctantly ascended the stair. "I am very glad indeed to hear that you were down to-day. You are looking—ah—better already," said the kind young man. As for Harry Frankland, he came forward and offered his hand, putting down at the same time on the table a pile of books with which he was loaded.

"My cousin told me you wanted to learn Italian," said Harry; "so I brought you the books. It's a very easy language; though people talk great nonsense about its being musical. It is not a bit sweeter than English. If you only go to Nice, French will answer quite well." He sat down suddenly and uncomfortably

as he delivered himself of this utterance; and Colin, for his part, took up the grammar, and looked at it as if he had no other interest under the sun.

"I don't agree with Frankland there," said the curate; "everything is harmonious in Italy except the churches. I know you are a keen observer, and I am sure you will be struck with the fine spirit of devotion in the people; but the churches are the most impious edifices in existence," said the Anglican, with warmth—which was said, not because the curate was thinking of ecclesiastical art at the moment, but by way of making conversation, and conducting the interview between the saved man and his deliverer comfortably to an end.

"I think you said you had never been in Scotland?" said Lauderdale. For my part I'm no heeding much about the churches; but I'm curious to see the workings of an irrational system where it has no limit. It's an awfu' interesting subject of inquiry; and there is little doubt in my mind that a real popular system must aye be more or less irrational——"

"I beg your pardon," said the curate. "Of course there are many errors in the Church of Rome; but I don't see that such a word as irrational——"

"It's a very good word," said Lauderdale. "I'm no using it in a contemptuous sense. Man's an irrational being, take him at his best. I'm not saying if it's above reason or below reason, but out of reason; which makes it none the worse to me. All religion's out of reason for that matter—which is a thing we never can be got to allow in Scotland. You understand it better here," said the philosopher; but the curate's attention was too much distracted to leave him any time for self-defence.

During this pause, however, Colin and Harry were eyeing each other over the Italian books. "You won't find it at all difficult," said young Frankland; "if you had been staying longer we might have helped you. I say—look here; I am

much obliged to you," Harry added suddenly: "a fellow does not know what to say in such circumstances. I am horribly vexed to think of your being ill. I'd be very glad to do as much for you as you have done for me."

"Which is simply nothing at all," said Colin, hastily; and then he became conscious of the effort the other had made. "Thank you for saying so much. I wish you could, and then nobody would think any more about it," he said, laughing; and they regarded each other for another half minute across the table while Lauderdale and the curate kept on talking heresy. Then Colin suddenly held out his hand.

"It seems my fate to go away without a grudge against anybody," said the young man; "which is hard enough when one has a certain right to a grievance. Good-bye. I daresay after this your path and mine will scarcely cross again."

"Good-bye," said Harry Frankland, rising up—and he made a step or two to the door, but came back again, swallowing a lump in his throat. "Good-bye," he repeated, holding out his hand another time. "I hope you'll soon get well! God bless you, old fellow! I never knew you till now;" and so disappeared very suddenly, closing the door after him with a little unconscious violence. Colin lay back in his chair with a smile on his face. The two who were talking beside him had their ears intently open to this bye-play, but they went on with their talk, and left the principal actors in the little drama alone.

"I wonder if I am going to die?" said Colin, softly, to himself; and then he caught the glance of terror, almost of anger, with which his mother stopped short and looked at him, with her lips apart, as if her breathing had stopped for the moment. "Mother, dear, I have no such intention," said the young man; "only that I am leaving Wodensbourne with feelings so amicable and amiable to everybody, that it looks

alarming. Even Harry Frankland, you see—and this morning his cousin——"

"What about his cousin, Colin?" said the Mistress, with bated breath.

Upon which Colin laughed—not harshly or in mockery—softly, with a sound of tenderness, as if somewhere not far off there lay a certain fountain of tears.

"She is very pretty, mother," he said, "very sweet, and kind, and charming. I daresay she will be a leader of fashion a few years hence, when she is married; and I shall have great pleasure in paying my respects to her when I go up from the Assembly in black silk stockings, with a deputation, to present an address to the Queen."

Mrs. Campbell never heard any more of what had been or had not been between her son and the little siren whom she herself, in the bitterness of her heart, had taken upon herself to reprove; and this was how Colin, without, as he said, a grudge against anybody, concluded the episode of Wodensbourne.

Some time, however, elapsed before it was possible for Colin and his companion to leave England. Colin of Ramore was, as his wife had imagined, slow to perceive the necessity for so expensive a proceeding. The father's alarm by this time had come to a conclusion. The favourable bulletins which the Mistress had sent from time to time by way of calming the anxiety of the family, had appeared to the farmer the natural indications of a complete recovery; and so thought Archie, who was his father's chief adviser in the absence of the mistress of the house.

"The wife's gone crazy," said big Colin. "She thinks this laddie of hers should be humoured and made of as if he was Sir Thomas Frankland's son." And the farmer treated with a little carelessness his wife's assurances that a warmer climate was necessary for Colin.

"Naebody would ever have thought of such a thing had he

been at hame when the accident happened," said Archie; which was, indeed, very true: and the father and son, who were the money-makers of the family, thought the idea altogether fantastical. The matter came to be mentioned to the minister, who was, like everybody else on the Holy Loch, interested about Colin, and, as it happened, finally reached the ears of the same Professor who had urged him to compete for the Baliol scholarship. Now, it would be hard in this age of competitive examinations to say anything in praise of a university prize awarded by favour—not to say that the prizes in Scotch universities are so few as to make such patronage specially invidious. Matters are differently managed now-a-days, and it is to be hoped that pure merit always wins the tiny rewards which Scotch learning has at its disposal; but in Colin's day the interest of a popular professor was worth something. The little conclave was again gathered round the fire in Colin's room at Wodensbourne, reading, with mingled feelings, a letter from Ramore, when another communication from Glasgow was put into Colin's hand. The farmer's letter had been a little impatient, and showed a household disarranged and out of temper. One of the cows was ill, and the maid-servant of the period had not proved herself equal to the emergency. "I don't want to hurry you, or to make Colin move before he is able," wrote the head of the house; "but it appears to me that he would be far more likely to recover his health and strength at home." The Mistress had turned aside, apparently to look out at the window, from which was visible a white blast of rain sweeping over the dreary plain which surrounded Wodensbourne, though in reality it was to hide the gush of tears that had come to her eyes. Big Colin and his wife were what people call "a very united couple," and had kept the love of their youth wonderfully fresh in their hearts; but still there were times when the man was impatient and dull of understanding, and could not comprehend the

woman, just as, perhaps, though Mrs. Campbell was not so clearly aware of that side of the question, there might be times when, on her side, the woman was equally a hindrance to the man. She looked out upon the sweeping rain, and thought of the "soft weather" on the Holy Loch, which had so depressing an effect upon herself, notwithstanding her sound health and many duties, and of the winds of March which were approaching, and of Colin's life,—the most precious thing on earth, because the most in peril. What was she to do, a poor woman who had nothing, who could earn nothing, who had only useless yearnings and cares of love to give her son?

While Mrs. Campbell was thus contemplating her impotence, and wringing her hands in secret over the adverse decision from home, Lauderdale was walking about the room in a state of high good-humour and content, radiant with the consciousness of that hundred pounds, "or maybe mair," with which it was to be his unshared, exclusive privilege to succour Colin. "I see no reason why we should wait longer. The Mistress is wanted at home, and the east winds are coming on; and, when our siller is spent we'll make more," said the exultant philosopher. And it was at this moment of all others that the professor's letter was put into the invalid's hands. He read it in silence, while the Mistress remained at the window, concocting in her mind another appeal to her husband, and wondering in her tender heart how it was that men were so dull of comprehension and so hard to manage. "If Colin should turn ill again"—for she dared not even think the word she meant—"his father would never forgive himsel'," said the Mistress to herself; and, as for Lauderdale, he had returned to the contemplation of a Continental Bradshaw, which was all the literature of which at this crisis Colin's friend was capable. They were both surprised when Colin rose up, flushed and excited, with this letter which nobody had attached any importance to in his hands. "They

have given me one of the new scholarships," said Colin without any preface, "to travel and complete my studies. It is a hundred pounds a year; and I think, as Lauderdale says, we can start to-morrow," said the young man, who in his weakness and excitement was moved almost to tears.

"Eh, Colin, the Lord bless them!" said the Mistress, sitting down suddenly in the nearest chair. She did not know who it was upon whom she was bestowing that benediction, which came from the depths of her heart; but she had to sit still after she had uttered it, blinded by two great tears that made even her son's face invisible, and with a trembling in her frame, which rendered her incapable of any movement. She was inconsistent, like other human creatures. When she had attained to this sudden deliverance, and had thanked God for it, it instantly darted through her mind that her boy was going to leave her on a solemn and doubtful journey, now to be delayed no longer; and it was some time before she was able to get up and arrange for the last time the carefully-mended linen, which was all ready for him now. She packed it, shedding a few tears over it, and saying prayers in her tender heart for her firstborn; and God only knows the difficulty with which she preserved her smile and cheerful looks, and the sinking of her heart when all her arrangements were completed. Would he ever come back again to make her glad? "You'll take awfu' care of my laddie?" she said to Lauderdale, who, for his part, was not delighted with the scholarship; and that misanthrope answered, "Ay, I'll take care of him." This was all that passed between the two guardians, who knew, in their inmost hearts, that the object of their care might never come back again. All the household of Wodensbourne turned out to wish Colin a good journey next morning when he went away; and the Mistress put down her old-fashioned veil when the express was gone which carried him to London, and went home again humbly by the night-train.

Fortunately there was in the same carriage with her a harassed young mother with little children, whose necessities speedily demanded the lifting up of Mrs. Campbell's veil. And the day was clear on the Holy Loch, and all her native hills held out their arms to her, when the good woman reached her home. She was able to see the sick cows that afternoon, and her experience suggested a means of relieving the speechless creatures which filled the house with admiration. "She may be a foolish woman about her bairns," said big Colin, who was half pleased and half angry to hear her story; "but it's a different-looking house when the wife comes hame." And thus the natural sunshine came back again to the Mistress's eyes.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Colin and his guardian went on their way in a direction opposite to that in which the Mistress travelled sadly alone. They made all the haste possible out of the cold and boisterous weather, to get to sea; which was at once, according to all their hopes, to bring health to the invalid. Lauderdale, who carried his little fortune about him, had been at great pains in dispersing it over his person; so that, in case of falling among thieves—which, to a man venturing into foreign parts for the first time, seemed but too probable—he might, at least, have a chance of saving some portion of his store. But he was not prepared for the dire and dreadful malady which seized him unawares, and made him equally incapable of taking care of his money and of taking care of Colin. He could not even make out how many days he had lain helpless and useless in what was called the second cabin of the steamer—where the arrangements and the provisions were less luxurious than in the more expensive quarters. But Lauderdale, under the circumstances, did not believe in comfort; he gave it up as a thing impossible. He fell into a state of utter scepticism as he lay in agonies of sea-sickness on the shelf which represented a bed. "Say nothing to me about getting there," he said, with as much indignation as he was capable of. "What do you mean by *there*, callant? As for land, I'm far from sure that there's such a thing in existence. If there is, we'll never get to it. It's an awful thing for a man in his senses to deliver himself up to this idiot of a sea, to be played with like a bairn's ball. It's very easy to laugh; if you had been standing on your head, like me, for twenty days in succession—"

"Only four days," said Colin, laughing, "and the gale is over. You'll be better to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" said Lauderdale, with a contemptuous groan; "I've no faith in to-morrow. I'm no equal to reckoning time according to ordinary methods, and I'm no conscious of ever having existed in a more agreeable position. As for the chances of ever coming head uppermost again, I would not give sixpence for them. It's all very well for the like of you. Let me alone, callant; if this infernal machine of a ship would but go down without more ado, and leave a man in peace—that's the pleasantest thing I can think of. Don't speak to me about Italy. It's all a snare and delusion to get honest folk off firm ground. Let me get to the bottom in peace and quiet. Life's no worth having at such a price," sighed the sufferer; to whom his undutiful charge answered only by laughter and jibes, which, under the circumstances, were hard to bear.

"You are better now," said the heartless youth, "or you could not go into the philosophy of the subject. To-morrow morning you'll eat a good breakfast, and—"

"Dinna insult my understanding," said Colin's victim. "Go away, and look out for your Italy, or whatever you call it. A callant like you believes in everything. Go away and enjoy yourself. If you don't go peaceably, I'll put you out," cried the miserable man, lifting himself up from his pillow, and seizing a book which Colin had laid there, to throw at his tormentor. A sudden lurch, however, made an end of the discomfited philosopher. He fell back, groaning, as Colin escaped out of the little cabin. "It's quite intolerable, and I'll no put up with it any longer," said Lauderdale to himself. And he recalled, with a sense of injury, Colin's freedom from the overpowering malady under which he was himself suffering. "It's me that's ill, and no him," he thought, with surprise, and the thought prevailed even over seasickness. By-and-by it warmed with a delicious glow of hope

and consolation the heart of the sufferer. "If it sets the callant right, I'm no heeding for myself," he said in his own mind, with renewed heroism. Perhaps it was because, as Colin said, Lauderdale was already beginning to be better that he was capable of such generosity. Certainly the ship lurched less and less as the evening went on, and the moonlight stole in at the port-hole and caressed the sufferer, widening his horizon a little before he was aware. He had begun to wonder whether Colin had his great-coat on before long, and fell asleep in that thought, and worked out his remaining spell of misery in gigantic efforts—continued all through the night—to get into Colin's coat, or to get Colin into his coat, he was not quite sure which. Meanwhile, the object of Lauderdale's cares was on deck, enjoying the moonlight, and the sense of improving health, and all the excitement and novelty of his new life.

They had been four days at sea, and Colin, who had not been ill, had become acquainted with the aspect of all his fellow-passengers who were as good sailors as himself. They were going to Leghorn, as the easiest way of reaching Italy; and there were several invalids on board, though none whose means made necessary a passage in the second cabin, of which Colin himself and Lauderdale were the sole occupants. Of the few groups on the quarter-deck who were able to face the gale, Colin had already distinguished one, a young man, a little older than himself, exceedingly pale and worn with illness, accompanied by a girl a year or two younger. The two were so like each other as to leave no doubt that they must be brother and sister, and so unlike as to call forth the compassionate observation of everybody who looked at them. The young lady's blooming face delicately round and full, with the perfect outline of health and youth, had been paled at first by the struggle between incipient sea-sickness and the determination not to leave her brother; but by this time—at the cost of whatever private agonies—she had apparently surmounted the common weakness, and was throwing

into fuller and fuller certainty, without knowing it, by the contrast of her own bloom, the sentence of death written on his face. When they were on deck, which was the only time that they were visible to Colin, she never left him; holding fast by his arm with an anxious tenacity, not receiving, but giving support; and watching him with incessant, breathless anxiety, as if afraid that he might suddenly drop away from her side. The brother, for his part, had those hollow eyes, set in wide pathetic niches, which are never to be mistaken by those who have once watched beloved eyes widening out into that terrible breadth and calm. He was as pale as if the warm blood of life had already been wrung out of him drop by drop; but, notwithstanding this aspect of death, he was still possessed by a kind of feverish activity, the remains of strength, and seemed less disturbed by the gale than any other passenger. He was on deck at all hours, holding conversations with such of the sailors as he could get at —talking to the captain, who seemed to eschew his society, and to such of his fellow-travellers as were visible there.

What the subject of this sick traveller's talk might be, Colin from his point of observation could not tell; but there was no mistaking the evidences of natural eloquence and the eagerness of the speaker. "He ought to be a preacher by his looks," Colin said to himself, as he stood within the limits to which, as a second-class passenger, he was confined, and saw at a little distance from him, the worn figure of the sick man, upon whose face the moonlight was shining. As usual, the sister was clinging to his arm and listening to him with a rapt countenance; not so much concerned about what he said, it seemed, as absorbed in anxious investigation of his looks. It was one of the sailors this time who formed the audience which the invalid addressed —a man whom he had stopped in the midst of something he was doing, and who was listening with great evident embarrassment, anxious to escape, but more anxious still, like a good-hearted fellow as he was, not to disturb or irritate the suffering man.

Colin drew a step nearer, feeling that the matter under discussion could be no private one, and the sound of the little advance he made caught the invalid's nervous ear. He turned round upon Colin before he could go back, and suddenly fixed him with those wonderful dying eyes. "I shall see you again another time, my friend," he said to the released seaman, who hastened off with an evident sense of having escaped. When the stranger turned round he had to move back his companion, so that in the change of position she came to be exactly in front of Colin, so near that the two could not help seeing, could not help observing each other. The girl withdrew her eyes a moment from her brother to look at the new face thus presented to her. She did not look at Colin as a young woman usually looks at a young man. She was neither indifferent, nor did she attempt to seem so. She looked at him eagerly, with a question in her eyes. The question was a strange one to be addressed, even from the eyes, by one stranger to another. It said as plain as words, "Are you a man to whom I can appeal—are you a man who will understand *him?* Shall I be able to trust you, and ask your help?" That and nothing else was in the wistful anxious look. If Colin's face had not been one which said "Yes" to all such questions, she would have turned away, and thought of him no more; as it was, she looked a second time with a touch of interest, a gleam of hope. The brother took no more apparent notice of her than if she had been a cloak on his arm, except that from time to time he put out his thin white hand to make sure that she was still there. He fixed his eyes on Colin with a kind of solemn stedfastness, which had a wonderful effect upon the young man, and said something hasty and brief, a most summary preface, about the beautiful night. "Are you ill?" he added, in the same hasty, breathless way, as if impatient of wasting time on such preliminaries. "Are you going abroad for your health?"

Colin, who was surprised by the question, felt almost dis-

inclined to answer it—for in spite of himself it vexed him to think that anybody could read that necessity in his face. He said, "I think so," with a smile which was not quite spontaneous; "my friends at least have that meaning," he added more naturally a moment afterwards, with the intention of returning the question; but that possibility was taken rapidly out of his hands.

"Have you ever thought of death?" said the stranger. "Don't start—I am dying, or I would not ask you. When a man is dying he has privileges. Do you know that you are standing on the brink of a precipice? Have you ever thought of death?"

"Yes, a great deal," said Colin. It would be wrong to say that the question did not startle him; but, after the first strange shock of such an address, an impulse of response and sympathy filled his mind. It might have been difficult to get into acquaintance by means of the chit-chat of society, which requires a certain initiation; but such a grand subject was common ground. He answered as very few of the people interrogated by the sick man did answer. He did not show either alarm or horror—he started slightly, it is true, but he answered without much hesitation:

"Yes, I have thought often of death," said Colin. Though he was only a second-class passenger, this was a question which put all on an equality; and now it was not difficult to understand why the captain eschewed his troublesome questioner, and how the people looked embarrassed to whom he spoke.

"Ah, I am glad to hear such an answer," said the stranger; "so few people can say so. You have found out, then, the true aim of life. Let us walk about, for it is cold, and I must not shorten my working-days by any devices of my own. My friend, give me a little hope that, at last, I have found a brother in Christ."

"I hope so," said Colin, gravely. He was still more startled by the strain in which his new companion proceeded; but a

dying man *had* privileges. "I hope so," Colin repeated; "one of many here."

"Ah, no, not of many," said the invalid; "if you can feel certain of being a child of God, it is what but few are permitted to do. My dear friend, it is not a subject to deceive ourselves upon. It is terribly important for you and me. Are you sure that you are fleeing from the wrath to come? Are you sure that you are prepared to meet your God?"

They had turned into the full moonlight, which streamed upon their faces. The ship was rushing along through a sea still agitated by the heavings of the past storm, and there was nothing moving on deck except some scattered seamen busy in their mysterious occupations. Colin was slow to answer the new question thus addressed to him. He was still very young; delicate, and reticent about all the secrets of his soul; not wearing his heart upon his sleeve even in particulars less intimate and momentous than this. "I am not afraid of my God," he said, after a minute's pause; "pardon me, I am not used to speak much on such subjects. I cannot imagine that to meet God can be less than the greatest joy of which the soul is capable. He is our Father. I am not afraid."

"Oh, my friend!" said the eager stranger; his voice sounded in Colin's ear like the voice of a desperate man in a lifeboat, calling to somebody who was drowning in a storm,—"don't deceive yourself; don't take up a sentimental view of such an important matter. There is no escape except through one way. The great object of our lives is to know how to die—and to die is despair, without Christ."

"What is it to live without Him?" said Colin. "I think the great object of our lives is to live. Sometimes it is very hard work. And, when one sees what is going on in the world, one does not know how it is possible to keep living without Him," said the young man, whose mind had taken a profound impression from the events of the last three months. "I don't

see any meaning in the world otherwise. So far we are agreed. Death, which interests you so much, will clear up all the rest."

"Which interests me?" said his new friend; "if we were indeed rational creatures, would it not interest every one? Beyond every other subject, beyond every kind of ambition and occupation—think what it is to go out of this life, with which we are familiar, to stand alone before God, to answer for the deeds done in the body ——"

"Then, if you are so afraid of God," said Colin, "what account do you make of Christ?"

A gleam of strange light went over the gaunt eager face. He put out his hand with his habitual movement, and laid it upon his sister's hand, which was clinging to his arm. "Alice, hush!" said the sick man; "don't interrupt me. He speaks as if he knew what I mean; he speaks as if he too had something to do with it. I may be able to do him good or he me. I have not the pleasure of knowing your name," he said, suddenly turning again to Colin with the strangest difference of manner. "Mine is Meredith. My sister and I will be glad if you will come to our cabin. I should like to have a little conversation with you. Will you come?"

Colin would have said No; but the word was stayed on his lips by a sudden look from the girl who had been drawn on along with them, without any apparent will of her own. It was only in her eyes that any indication of individual meaning on her part was visible. She did not speak, nor appear to think it necessary that she should second her brother's invitation; but she gave Colin a hasty look, conveying such an appeal as went to his heart. He did not understand it; if he had been asked to save a man's life the petition could not have been addressed to him more imploringly. His own wish gave way instantly before the eager supplication of those eyes: not that he was charmed or attracted by her, for she was too much absorbed, and her existence too much wrapt up in that of her

brother, to exercise any personal influence. A woman so preoccupied had given up her privileges of woman. Accordingly, there was no embarrassment in the direct appeal she made. The vainest man in existence could not have imagined that she cared for his visit on her own account. Yet it was at her instance that Colin changed his original intention, and followed them down below to the cabin. His mind was sufficiently free to leave him at liberty to be interested in others, and his curiosity was already roused.

The pair did not look less interesting when Colin sat with them at the table below, in the little cabin, which did not seem big enough to hold anything else except the lamp. There, however, the sister exerted herself to make tea, for which she had all the materials. She boiled her little kettle over a spirit-lamp in a corner apart, and set everything before them with a silent rapidity very wonderful to Colin, who perceived at the same time that the sick man was impatient even of those soft and noiseless movements. He called to her to sit down two or three times before she was ready, and visibly fumed over the slight commotion, gentle as it was. He had seated himself in a corner of the hard little sofa which occupied one side of the cabin, and where there already lay a pile of cushions for his comfort. His thoughts were fixed on eternity, as he said and believed; but his body was profoundly sensitive to all the little annoyances of time. The light tread of his sister's foot on the floor seemed to send a cruel vibration through him, and he glanced round at her with a momentary glance of anger, which called forth an answering sentiment in the mind of Colin, who was looking on.

"Forgive me, Arthur," said the girl, "I am so clumsy; I can't help it"—an apology which Arthur answered with a melancholy frown.

"It is not you who are clumsy; it is the evil one who tempts me perpetually, even by your means," he said. "Tell me what your experience is," he continued, turning to Colin with more

eagerness than ever; I find some people who are embarrassed when I speak to them about the state of their souls; some who assent to everything I say, by way of getting done with it; some who are shocked and frightened, as if speaking of death would make them die the sooner. You alone have spoken to me like a man who knows something about the matter. Tell me how you have grown familiar with the subject—tell me what your experiences are."

Perhaps no request that could possibly have been made to Colin would have embarrassed him so much. He was interested and touched by the strange pair in whose company he found himself, and could not but regard with a pity, which had some fellow-feeling in it, the conscious state of life-in-death in which his questioner stood, who was not, at the same time, much older than himself, and still in what ought to be the flower of his youth. Though his own thoughts were of a very different complexion, Colin could not but be impressed by the aspect of the other youth, who was occupying the solemn position from which he himself seemed to have escaped.

"Neither of us can have much experience one way or another," he said, feeling somehow his own limitations in the person of his new companion; "I have been near dying; that is all."

"Have been!" said Meredith. "Are you not—are not we all, near dying now? A gale more or less, a spark of fire, a wrong turn of the helm, and we are all in eternity! How can any reasonable creature be indifferent for a moment to such a terrible thought?"

"It would be terrible, indeed, if God had nothing to do with it," said Colin; "and, no doubt, death is terrible when one looks at it far off. I don't think, however, that his face carries such terror when he is near. The only thing is the entire ignorance we are in. What it is—where it carries us—what is the extent of the separation it makes; all these questions are so hard to answer." Colin's eyes went away as he spoke; and his new

friend, like Matty Frankland, was puzzled and irritated by the look which he could not follow. He broke in hastily with a degree of passion totally unlike Colin's calm.

"You think of it as a speculative question," he said; "I think of it as a dreadful reality. You seem at leisure to consider when and how; but have you ever considered the dreadful alternative? Have you never imagined yourself one of the lost —in outer darkness—shut out and separated from all good—condemned to sink lower and lower? Have you ever contemplated the possibility—?"

"No," said Colin, rising; "I have never contemplated that possibility, and I have no wish to do so now. Let us postpone the discussion. Nothing anybody can say," the young man continued, holding out his hand to meet the feverish, thin fingers which were stretched towards him, "can make me afraid of God."

"Not if you had to meet Him this night in judgment?" said the solemn voice of the young prophet, who would not lose a last opportunity. The words and the look sent a strange chill through Colin's veins. His hand was held tight in the feverish hand of the sick man—the dark hollow eyes were looking him through and through. Death himself, could he have taken shape and form, could scarcely have confronted life in a more solemn guise. "Not if you had to meet Him in judgment this night?"

"You put the case very strongly," said Colin, who grew a little pale in spite of himself. "But I answer, No—no. The Gospel has come for very little purpose if it leaves any of His children in fear of the Heavenly Father. No more to-night. You look tired, as you may well be, with all your exertions, and after this rough weather—"

"The rough weather is nothing to me," said Meredith; "I must work while it is day—the night cometh in which no man can work."

"The night has come," said Colin, doing the best he could to

smile ; "the human night, in which men do not attempt to work. Don't you think you should obey the natural ordinances as well as the spiritual? To-morrow we will meet, better qualified to discuss the question."

"To-morrow we may meet in eternity," said the dying man.

"Amen ; the question will be clear then, and we shall have no need to discuss it," said Colin. This time he managed better to smile. "But, wherever we meet to-morrow, good-bye for to-night—good-bye. You know what the word means," he said. He smiled to himself even at the thoughts suggested to him by his own words. He too was pale, and had no great appearance of strength. If he himself felt the current of life flowing back into his veins, the world and even his friends were scarcely of his opinion. He looked but a little way farther off from the solemn verge than his new acquaintance did, as he stood at the door of the little cabin, his face lit up with the vague, sweet, brightening of a smile, which was not called forth by anything external, but came out of the musings and memories of his own heart. Such a smile could not be counterfeit. When he had turned towards the narrow stair which led to the deck, he felt a touch upon his arm, like the touch of a bird, it was so light and momentary. "Come again," said a voice in his ear, "come again." He knew it was the sister who spoke ; but the voice did not sound in Colin's ears as the voice of a woman to a man. It was impersonal, disembodied, independent of all common restrictions. She had merged her identity altogether in that of her brother. All the light, all the warmth, all the human influence she had, she was pouring into him, like a lantern, bright only for the bearer, turning a dark side to the world.

Colin's head throbbed and felt giddy when he emerged into the open air above, into the cold moonlight, to which the heaving of the sea gave a look of disturbance and agitation which almost reached the length of pain. There was nothing akin in that passionless light to the tumult of the great chafing ocean, the

element most like humanity. True, it was not real storm, but only the long pantings of the vast bosom, after one of those anger-fits to which the giant is prone; but a fanciful spectator could not but link all kinds of imaginations to the night, and Colin was pre-eminently a fanciful spectator. It looked like the man storming, the woman watching with looks of powerless anguish; or like the world heaving and struggling, and some angel of heaven grieving and looking on. Colin lingered on the deck, though it was cold, and rest was needful. What could there be in the future existence more dark, more hopeless than the terrible enigmas which built up their dead walls around a man in this world, and passed interpretation. Even the darkest hell of poetic invention comprehended itself and knew why it was; but this life, who comprehended, who could explain?

The thought was very different from those with which Arthur Meredith resigned himself reluctantly to rest. He could not consent to sleep till he had written a page or two of the book which he meant to leave as a legacy to the world, and which was to be called "A Voice from the Grave." This poor young fellow had forgotten that God Himself was likely to take some pains about the world which had cost so much. After the "unspeakable gift" once for all, it appeared to young Meredith that the rest of the work was left on *his* shoulders, and on the shoulders of such as he; and, accordingly he wore his dying strength out, addressing everybody in season and out of season, and working at "A Voice from the Grave." A strange voice it was—saying little that was consolatory; yet, in its way, true, as everything is true in a certain limited sense which comes from the heart. The name of the Redeemer was named a great many times therein, but the spirit of it was as if no Redeemer had ever come. A world, dark, confused, and full of judgments and punishments—a world in which men would not believe though one rose from the grave—was the world into which he looked, and for which he was working. His sister Alice,

watching by his side, noting with keen anxiety every time the pen slipped from his fingers, every time it went vaguely over the paper in starts which told he had gone half to sleep over his work, sat with her intelligence unawakened, and her whole being slumbering, thinking of nothing but him. After all, Colin was not so fanciful when in his heart it occurred to him to connect these two with the appearance of the moon and the sea. They had opened the book of their life to him fortuitously, without any explanations, and he did not know what to make of it. When he descended to his own cabin and found Lauderdale fast asleep, the young man could not but give a little time to the consideration of this new scene which had opened in his life. It was natural to Colin's age and temperament to expect that something would come of such a strange, accidental meeting; and so he lay and pondered it, looking out at the troubled moonlight on the water, till that disturbed guardian of the night had left her big troublesome charge to himself. The ship ploughed along its lonely road with tolerable composure and quietness, for the first time since it set out, and permitted to some of its weary passengers unwonted comfort and repose; but, as for Colin, a sense of having set out upon a new voyage came into his mind, he could not tell why.

END OF VOL. I.

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