SHARPE'S

LONDON MAGAZINE

OF

ENTERTAINMENT AND INSTRUCTION

FOR GENERAL READING.

CONDUCTED BY MRS. S. C. HALL.

With Elegant Steel Engravings.

VOL. I.—NEW SERIES.

LONDON:

VIRTUE, HALL, AND VIRTUE, 25, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

ANNIE ORME.

HOW ANNIE ORME WAS SETTLED IN LIFE, AND WHAT WE DID TO HELP IT ON.
BY HER AUNT, MISS RACHEL SINCLAIR, MANTUA-MAKER, LASSWADE.

(Communicated by the Author of "Margaret Maitland," &c. &c.)

CHAPTER I.

WHERE we live is about six miles out of Edinburgh. In the summer time, the place is full of folk, seeking country air, and health, and change. Some come because they are delicate, some because other folk come; but, whatever the reason is, there are aye strangers at Lasswade, and a good house is a kind of heritage, by reason of the high rents that the visitors are content to give.

I have heard folk call it dull, and some say that they do not like the place, but I never heard a word from one meaning, even in a far-off way, that Lasswade was not bonnie. Behind us we have woods, before us we have the Esk, which, for its size, is as fine a river as you will see in any place. I would not undertake to say it was just like the Clyde, or the Thames, or the St. Lawrence, though I never saw them, and may-be they are not so grand as young Nicol Mouter says; but when the sun shines on our water, and the light comes down, green and cool, through the lime-trees, and you look along the hollow, and see the steep braes and the links of the water glimmering away into the sky, with a house here and there, sitting quiet on its side, the way the bairns sit in the warm days laving their feet, you would like the Esk, and come back in your thoughts to look at it again. No doubt it is finer to young folk when it wears in among the woods, and whiles you can just hear it, as if it were stepping cannily upon broken branches and over stepping-stones; but to me, that am older than I once was, it is pleasantest to see the houses climbing up the braes, and at night to look across the bridge at the lights shining in the dark water. I mind seeing them many a night, when my sister Alexina and me were coming home from the school in winter. My mother used to set the door open—we lived in a white house on the brae, as you go to Mavis-wood—and little Annie, that was the youngest of us, sat on the outer-step with our dog, Warlock, and cried our names in the darkening, long before we came in sight. I think sometimes I hear her yet, when the winter afternoon has worn past, and the lights begin to be lighted in the town. The air has just the same hum it used to have when she cried down through the dark, "Lexie! Rechie! come home!" And there is aye a bark now and then, to stand for the little short bark that Warlock threw in whenever Annie cried. Annie Orme, my dear! it is your mother I am thinking about—but you need not cry.

We were six of us in a family, and we were brought up with a fight, like most poor men's bairns. Robert, the oldest son, was a merchant in the town, and had a good shop of his own for a while, and looked like a prosperous person; but he failed, poor man, and went away to America, in the year 'eighteen, which was the year that Annie Orme was born. George was a clerk in an office in Edinburgh: he was a kindly lad as ever was, but never throve;—it might be his own blame—it might be other folks'—it is not my part to say. John died when he was young: he was the flower of them all, and we laid him in the churchyard, at Pennycuick. These were all my brothers.

My sister Lexie is the oldest of the family. She never was well-favoured, honest woman, any more than myself; but she had a head as different from mine as the Esk water is from the sea. There never was such a good judgment and sensible mind in our family as Lexie's, and so everybody said;—she thought so herself besides, which was her only fault.

My father was a tall, thin man; my mother, a fat body, round and merry. Lexie is like the one—she is as tall as the precentor—and I am like the other;—so that I see strangers give looks at us on the road to the church, and laugh to themselves, and ask who the little body is, trotting away after the lang lady? But I never heed; for when the folk say it is Miss Rechie Sinclair, they commonly put in a kindly word, which I like to hear.

But my sister Annie was like none of us—like none of us—poor sorrowful, heart-broken lassie. She married a young man that was not what he should have been; and as soon as she found it out, it went to her very soul, and she wasted away, and never looked up again. Yes, Annie Orme, my dear, your mother broke her heart; and a heart-break is a strange trouble. It took the light out of her eyes first,

then the colour from the lips—and I never saw gentle or simple, except one high lady, that was at Mrs. Lyons', last July, have lips or eyes like Annie Sinclair—and then, without a word, the gold bowl broke, and she departed. The lad died himself soon after; but you need not be downcast, Annie Orme—for you're come of creditable folk on one side, if there's nothing to boast of on the other.

So, as I was saying, we were left—after my father died, and Robert went to America—with my mother, a frail old woman, and Annie's infant, an orphan, in a strange woman's arms, and George in Edinburgh, in anything but a thriving way. Lexie and me had learned the mantua-making, and set up in a house near the toll, on the Dalkeith-road, six months before my father's death; so here we were, with the infant and the aged woman dependent on us, and George, poor man, taking a heavy lean, and us nothing but our needles and our thread in this wide world.

I could tell many a story of that time. We were sore enough pressed whiles; and folk that call my sister Lexie a hard woman, and laugh at her for being prim and stiff, would may-be have their own thoughts, if they knew how Lexie was trysted, when she was only young, and (no to speak of the sense that never forsook her) little wiser in appearance than other folk; but, any way, we got through. What with hard work of us both, and Lexie's thought and care and judgment, we paid our rent, and keeped upsides with the world. My old mother got comfort and quiet the time she was here, and was laid in the grave with respect and honour when she went away; and we aye did what we could for George, poor man, besides bringing up Annie Orme, Annie Sinclair's infant, in a creditable way, and keeping her at the school to get grammar and counting and all the higher branches, besides making her a perfect woman at white-seam, and as good a mantua-maker as any in the land.

She never had a dress yet—from her christening gown, that I worked myself at odd hours, for a whole year, to that white one she is sitting there at the window making for her wedding—but we have earned with the labour of our hands. I am not to say proud of this—be it far from me—but I think its anything but right of Lexie to scorn the work we've lived by, as she does. No doubt we're come of folk that were far above letting their daughters work common work like this; but, still we need it, and we have done it, not without credit; and I think there is very little gratitude to the Giver in thinking shame of the means that He gave us to get our bread by. It does not aye please Him to send the young ravens—whiles it is an honest handicraft instead of the birds—but well I wot, for my own part, I would rather get the bread in my quiet way, than in Elijah's; and one is just as great a bounty out of the full hand of Providence as ever the other could be.

Mr. Braird, of Windlestrae, is our third cousin. He comes in to see us sometimes, and sends us a fowl or two, and some apples in the season. It is very kind, and I am always glad to see him; for I will not say that I think little of good connexions any more than my neighbours. But Lexie, she's very proud, and likes to hold her head higher than common folk, and she is certainly too much taken up with being a friend of the family at Windlestrae.

We have been so long in business now, that we are thought by far the highest mantua-makers in Lasswade, or near hand; and many a one comes to us that would go to Edinburgh, if we were not here. Annie Orme—for we have brought her up to the business, whatever she may need, poor thing—is as neat-handed as can be, and Lexie is so thrifty in the cutting, that we get as grand silks sometimes as the queen's mantua-maker could have; so that we have laid by something in the bank, and got some new furnishings, and are in a prosperous way.

My niece, Annie Orme, is one-and-twenty past. I will not say that she just looks like her mother. Annie Sinclair had a look that minded me always of one of the sorrowful songs; she had a sigh in her heart, even in her first youth, like a bode of what was to come. Now, I am glad to say there is nothing like that about Annie Orme. She has a fine, bright, wholesome colour—not too much of it—and as white and soft a skin as could be desired. Then her hair has a kind of natural twist, not like positive curls, but just a wave over her brow; and though she is as neat and handsome as could be, she's not to call slender. But, to do her justice, Annie has so sensible and blythe and cheery a face, that everybody is pleased with it; and, though it may be true in a measure what Lexie says, that she is more given to fun and visible light-heartedness than staid folk like us may think desirable, I always mind that I was once young myself, and that the like of that is the most natural thing in the world. For Annie is not very much taken up with company; only, poor thing, having no sisters nor brothers, and nobody indeed but us, that have been spending all our thoughts on her all her life, she scarcely knew what trouble

or vexation was, till a year past, and even that was but for a time.

It may be now eighteen months byegone since Lexie and me were sitting by the fire, in an autumn night, just before the candle was lighted. There was a silk gown—a very grand flowered one, white and blue—that we were making for Mrs. Colonel Cranstoun, at Mavis-wood, spread out upon the black sofa, opposite the fire, and clippings of it were upon the table. It was just as near dark as it could be, not to be positive black night, and I mind the glimmering of the light silk in the darkness, and me looking at it, till I could almost fancy there was a lady lying there, and that the folds sometimes moved and altered. The fire was not very bright, but just burning quietly; and Lexie was sitting with her back to the window, and her feet on a little stool, having her hands clasped in her lap, as is her most common attitude when she is not working, looking just before her, and not thinking of anything, as I supposed. I was thinking myself about the things that were in the house, and how I would just slip away down to Mr. Mouter's for some tea, seeing Annie Orme would doubtless forget to bring it in with her, when suddenly my heart leaped to my mouth, and I nearly fell off my chair in astonishment, for—"Rechie," said my sister Lexie to me in a moment, "it's my desire that Annie Orme should be married."

"Dear me, Lexie," said I, when I had recovered my breath, "what has the poor thing done?"

It was a minute or two before Lexie spoke, and then she did not just answer me.

"I am fifty year old, Rechie," said my sister, "and you're seven-and-forty. Both of us have pingled at our seams for forty year good. No doubt it's been our appointed lot, and Providence knew best, and it's not our part to complain; but mantua-making is a wearisome life, Rechie, and undoubtedly it takes away the credit of a family when the women of it have to work for their bread. You need not contradict me: I ken very well—none better. Moreover, though our manner of life, being single gentlewomen, is the most honourable of any, yet the *canaille* jeer at us—aye, Rechie Sinclair, jeer at *me*—and it's my wish that Annie Orme should have another like lot from ours."

"Weel, Lexie," said I, "no doubt you ken best; but I think our lot has just been as guid as other folk's. We've aye had enough ourselves, and we've brought up Annie Orme as well as she could have been in her father's house. I cannot see, Lexie, what we have to complain of."

Lexie nodded her head, and shut her lips firm.

"We've aye had enough! Rechie, Rechie, will nothing give ye a higher way of thinking? I tell ye it's no creditable to womenfolk to have to work for their bread, and Annie Orme must have a house of her ain—I have made up my mind."

Now, it certainly did come into my head, that Annie Orme would just be as happy living like us—aye, and may-be happier—as going away into a house of her own, to battle all her days with a strange man, and aye to be in trouble about the spending, though she had no share in making the siller. However, as it is not my habit to cross Lexie, I just let this be, and cast about in my own mind who was the most feasible person to make a good man to Annie Orme.

"There's Mr. Manson, at the distillery," said I to myself; "he is a big, red Highlander, no more like our Annie than he's like me, but I'll no say that he'll have less than a hundred a-year, and that would surely please Lexie. Then, there's Mr. Smith, the English exciseman; but he's a fat body—I would not have him if he had *five* hundred, let alone one. Then, there's Dr. Jamieson, the young doctor; but he's in little practice yet, and would be looking higher than our Annie. And, then—aye, there's young Mr. Mouter, at the grocery shop."

Now, young Mr. Mouter was a very decent young man, and a brisk, well-looking lad besides, and one that took care of himself. Besides that, his shop was an old-established shop, left to him by his father, and doing a good business, seeing he supplied Mavis-wood and many of the gentlemen's houses round about, besides having the trade of the town.

"Lexie," said I, "it was just last Whitsunday that young Mr. Mouter shifted his seat in the kirk, out of the gallery, to the one he's in now, which is just close by ours, on the other side of the passage; and I have noticed his brother Nicol and him, that they have a great trick of looking to our side—which I am of opinion, Lexie, is neither for you nor me."

"Young Mr. Mouter!" said Lexie, in a sharp tone, "young Tammas Mouter, auld Sandy Mouter's son. Rechie Sinclair, ye vulgar-minded person! do you think I would let our Annie serve behind a counter! No; if I should slave for her all my days."

"Well, I'm sure, Lexie," said I—and I was a little angered, for young Mr. Mouter was a fine lad, and I had a liking for him—"I do not ken what you would be at. He could keep her in a creditable way, and aye have plenty. I

would not wonder, with thrift and good management, if they made a fortune."

"I never thought you were mercenary before, Rechie," said my sister, disdainfully. "Do you think I care for the dirty siller? Its a fash, no doubt, when folk have not enough, and often makes sair hearts; but to think I would give away my niece, Annie Orme, brought up under my ain eye, and fit for better things, on such a consideration as siller! No, Rechie, its nothing but your ignorance; so I may tell you who I have my eye on. Young Peter Braird comes and goes to Edinburgh every Saturday night and Monday morning. He is only Windlestrae's second son, it's true, but then the oldest is married already. Peter Braird, as you ken, is in a writer's office, learning the business, and is a very decent-like lad. *He* could not do better, as I think, than take up with Annie Orme."

"Preserve me, Lexie," said I; "Peter Braird?"

"Whatfor no?" said my sister.

I was so astonished, that I needed a rest before I could speak.

"Peter Braird! a lang, ill-grown lad, with a head that's so red you might see it on the tap of the Pentlands like a beacon. Peter Braird! that ye should even him to our bonnie Annie! And, Lexie, the lad, as you say, is only in a writer's office: he'll may-be never get to be a writer himself—nothing but a clerk, most likely, all his days—and if Annie would not be better sewing and working for herself than the like of that—"

Just at this moment a rap at the outer-door showed us that Annie was coming in; so I stopped in haste, and Lexie said quick, "Not a word to Annie;" and we were both sitting quiet in the dark when Annie Orme came in at the door.

Chapter II.

"Annie, my dear," said I, when I had stirred the fire, and got some light, "did you bring the tea?"

But, as I never expected she had brought it, I put over my hand, and lifted the lid of the big box, where we kept millinery; for it happened, that when I came home in the afternoon I had put my bonnet there.

"Yes, aunt," said Annie, "its here;" and she laughed a low mischievous kind of laugh, as if she had been doing some trick to somebody.

So I put down the lid of the millinery-box, and lighted the candle. Lexie was sitting stiff up in her chair, with her feet on the footstool, and a face of thought;—many a thought has gone through Lexie's head in her day, and it would be ill my part to set up for as good a judgment as hers. But in the matter of Peter Braird, when I looked at Annie, my heart rebelled; I could not but stand up against Lexie here, though I do not mind when I did it all my life before.

Annie was still laughing—not a loud laugh, but one that ran into all the corners of her face, and made dimples wherever it touched.

"You've been playing some trick, you monkey," said I; "but it was a wonder you minded the tea, after all."

"Phemie Mouter is to be a great friend of mine," said Annie; "she was at the door, and that minded me to go in. Phemie says we're to be very chief ever after this."

"And a very right thing, Annie," said I.

Annie laughed again. "Young Mr. Mouter had an errand up the Dalkeith-road; he came with me to the door—and Nicol wanted to come too, to take care of his brother. There, Aunt Rechie, that's the tea."

And Annie threw the parcel on the table, and ran away laughing. It might be she was pleased; but the mischief was so strong in her, and she herself was so innocent, that what might may-be make a quarrel between the two brothers, and give a sore heart to one of them, was nothing but fun to her.

But, to my astonishment, Lexie took a grip of my arm, as I gathered up the clippings on the table, to be ready for the tea.

"Rechie, mind what you're doing," said my sister, with an angered voice; "I'll never give my consent to that lad or the like of him, mind; and if you encourage him, its on your ain head."

Me! I drew myself away out of Lexie's hand, with a black mark above my elbow from her fingers, and feeling as if I had done some evil; when the truth is I had not done one single thing, and had never even thought—to call thinking—about young Mr. Mouter, or anybody like him, till she put it into my head.

We had our tea when Annie Orme came ben again, and there was little more said about it—though Annie herself was very ready to laugh the whole night, and was speaking something about Phemie Mouter and Nicol and Thomas whenever she could get an opportunity; but Lexie put in a sharp word about his father—Lexie has an extraordinary recollection of folk's fathers—which stopped Annie, though it made her laugh again.

Now, young Mr. Mouter had the principal

shop in Lasswade—just as we were the principal mantua-makers. He might be about five-and-twenty at that time, and had served his time in Edinburgh, and was a well-educated lad. He was very particular in his dress, when he got off the white apron, and came from behind the counter; and, as he was a well-looking young man, and had, as I say, been brought up in Edinburgh, he was much thought of in our little place;—so that I think it was a very natural thing of me to be pleased when I saw him seeking after Annie Orme.

Nicol, his brother, was at the sea—a fine lad, too, though a thought coarse, like most seafaring folk—but a very cheerful, happy-spirited young man he was, and all the bairns in the town were out of their wits about Nicol Mouter;—but, for all that, I felt at once that Nicol was not half so suitable as Thomas for Annie Orme.

Now, there was not much choice in Lasswade, as I think I have before said, even if all the lads in the town had been seeking Annie, which, indeed, they were not, nor anything like it;—so that I was in every way proud in secret—the like of me to be proud!—at having made up my mind for young Mr. Mouter, and not being content, as Lexie was, with a red-headed lad like Peter Braird.

The next night, which was Saturday, Peter went past in the afternoon, and, after his manner, stopped to say a word at the door. On common days, it was just "Good-day," and the lad went on; but this time Lexie behoved to have him in, and began a discourse, calling him "Mr. Peter" at every word. Poor lad, he was very bashful, and did not know what to do with his long legs, and the great red hands, which he commonly carries in his pockets. I am sure he was very glad to get away, and so was I when he went.

Just as he left the door, the milk-cart from Butterbraes drove past, going home fromEdinburgh. The man that was driving it was a very uncommon looking young man, who had been in service with Mr. Lait all the summer. On the Sabbath days, when he was at the kirk, we were constantly taking him for some strange gentleman, and often have I thought and said, that that lad was something above the common; but he just went about his work at the Butterbraes farm, and drove in the cart every Saturday to Edinburgh, like any other man. Well, as I say, Robbie drove past in his cart, just as Peter Braird went away from our door, and I could not help but let my eye fall, first on the one and then on the other. "Well," said I, and I was not aware I was speaking it out loud, so as Lexie and Annie could hear me; "its no doubt a grand thing to be come of a good family—but there's Robbie at the Butterbraes is a different looking man from Peter Braird."

"Rechie!" cried my sister; and the start she gave me with that fierce voice made me lose, I am sure, as much as a quarter of a yard of Mrs. Cranstoun's beautiful rich silk. But that was not the worst; lifting up my eyes—I was shaking a little with the thought of having angered Lexie—what should I see but a blush on the face of Annie Orme, as red as blush could be. I never had a greater start in my life—to think that she, a young creature choosing for herself, should have that thought for Peter Braird!

Chapter III.

On the Monday morning, a quiet Sabbath-day having come between, I was a little surprised to see Peter Braird rapping at the door. We were just at our breakfast ourselves; and, seeing I did not know what business he had at our house so soon again, I never moved to open the door.

"Let Mr. Peter in, Annie Orme," said Lexie. "Poor lad, he never likes to pass the house."

And Annie started up in a moment, in a way that it made me angry to see; but, however, our little maid, Beenie, was beforehand with her, and in a minute we heard a heavy foot in the passage, and Peter Braird put in his shoulder at the door, and gave a shy glance over it, like an awkward colt of a lad as he was.

"Come in, Mr. Peter," said Lexie. "Are they all well at Windlestrae this morning? You should call oftener, for its aye a pleasure to see you. Come in, and take a seat and a rest; its a long walk to Edinburgh."

So he came in, and sat down on the edge of the wooden chair—there is only one wooden chair in the parlour. He had a fine rose in his hand, in a pot—a monthly rose, but a very fine one of its kind.

"Are you going to carry it all the way to Edinburgh? How fresh it is, and bonnie," said Annie Orme.

"Na, its for you," said Peter; and he looked at me—not at Annie Orme.

"You've brought it in a present to Annie? Well, now, that is very considerate," said my sister; "for she has little in her power, Mr. Peter, seeing she *will* work to help us; though I am sure she need not unless she liked."

Now, this was very true; for my sister Lexie had that great a pride in Annie Orme, that

she would rather have worked double herself, to keep Annie like a lady.

"I was not meaning Miss Annie," said Peter, scraping about the floor with his foot, and holding the pot firm in his hand. "Miss Rechie, it's for you."

And saying that, he shoved it down upon the table beside me, with a very red face, and made me that I spilled my tea upon the clean table-cloth with the shake he gave my arm.

I thanked him the best way I could, and thought it was very kind; but all the time I was watching Annie Orme, to see if she looked disappointed—which she did not, so far as I could perceive.

And away went Peter with his red head. He was a good-natured callant, and I am sure it was very mindful of him; but, for all that, he need not have left the mark of the pot and his own big thumb upon my clean table-cloth.

Next day, Mrs. Cranstoun, of Mavis-wood, called about another gown. When we saw the little carriage she drives stop at the door, my first thought was to make the room right, and get some of the clippings out of the way; but Lexie aye has such a pride.

"Annie Orme," said my sister, "take your seam up the stair till this lady's away."

"I think you should let me stay, aunt," said Annie; for, now that I am a woman, I should work for you, and not you for me."

"Do what I bid you," said Lexie, in a peremptory manner; "it is not my purpose you should be a mantua-maker all your days, like Rechie and me. Go up the stair—I have other views for you, Annie Orme."

So, Annie having gone up stairs, Mrs. Cranstoun came in, and we got our business with her done. Afterwards, Lexie went out to Miss Trotter's, to see if she could get some trimmings; though I always said she would have to go in to Edinburgh for them.

"Aunt, what views has my Aunt Lexie for me?" said Annie Orme, when she came down. "What am I to be, if I'm no to be a mantua-maker? Surely—surely, she does not want me to be a lady's maid, Aunt Rechie?"

"Na, Annie Orme, no such thing," said I. "Lexie would never stoop to that; she says you're to have a house of your own."

Annie looked at me for a moment, in an uncertain way, and asked, "What do you say, auntie?" But before I could get time to answer, she put up her hands to her face, and threw down her seam, and burst into a laugh. I cannot just tell how long this laugh lasted; but that whole forenoon, till Lexie came home, it returned about every ten minutes, till she had to wipe her eyes, and laugh at herself again for laughing. But, along with this, there was a bit little blush going and coming, as if the same idea might have entered her own head before. No doubt it had; for these young creatures, you see, are so rash, and never consider what they are undertaking with, until the thing is past remeid, and, ill or well, they must go on.

"Your Aunt Lexie says you're to have a house of your own—the which has never happened to either her or me," said I; "and, more than that, Annie, my dear, she has her eye on the lad, too."

When Annie could speak for laughing, which was not for a while, she came and put her arms about my neck, and begged me to tell her who it was. Now, I'll not deny it was a great temptation; but I was honourable to Lexie—I would not tell her—for my heart smote me when I looked at the little rose-tree, and I could not speak an ill word of Peter Braird, though he had a red head.

"But I'll tell you a most sensible young lad, that would make a good man to you, Annie Orme, or else I'm much mistaken," said I. "He's in good business, and has plenty to maintain you in a creditable way; and he's a very wise-like young man. I see you have but to look kindly at him, and he'll do whatever you like."

"Who is that, Aunt Rechie?" said Annie; and what surprised me was, that her lips opened a little, by reason of the breath coming fast and short, and that she looked up for the moment without laughing, as if this was more earnest than joke.

"I've had my eye upon him this while," said I, "and a fine lad he is, I can answer for him, though your Aunt Lexie thinks he's far below your degree, and will not hear of him; but, for all that, he's a likely lad, Annie Orme."

Annie did not look up at me this time: she looked down close at her work, and her needle flew through her fingers like lightning, and her face turned so red, that I saw the cheeks must just be throbbing and beating with heat.

"Hold up your head, Annie, my dear," said I; "you'll get yourself a head-ache, if you stoop down that way;—and you need not think any shame, for young Mr. Mouter is a lad anybody might be pleased with; so there's no need for thinking shame."

But, before I had done speaking, Annie was standing on the floor, laughing like to bring down the house. I thought it was may-be only her agitation, poor thing; for I have seen folk cover a thing that moved them by laughing at it. But, however that might be, she

laughed even on, I cannot tell how long, so that I could hardly stop her; till, as I was standing at the window, I saw Lexie coming up the road, which had some effect upon the mirthfulness of Annie Orme. Just at that time, too, the milk-cart from Butterbraes drove away up on the road to Edinburgh, and Robbie, whom I have before mentioned, being in it, and seeing me at the window, took off his hat with an air that bewildered me, and gave me a bow. I never saw a man in Lasswade make such a grand bow, except the minister.

"Preserve, me, Annie," said I; "I wonder who that Robbie is—he surely must have come of better folk, and got a better up-bringing than the hinds here away; for, some way, I aye feel myself treating him as if he was a gentleman, and him only a farm servant. It is very strange to me."

To this which I said, Annie answered not a word, but sat down to her seam in a moment, and worked as busy at it as if it was for her life.

Chapter IV.

That night I went out myself to Robert White, the baker's, and in passing looked in at Mr. Mouter's shop, just to see what he was saying to it. He was in the shop himself, serving, and Phemie—I am sorry to think she is rather glaikit, having no mother over her, poor thing—was standing at the door of the parlour, behind the shop, swinging it back and forward in her hand, and laughing loud at something a young man had said that was standing at the counter. Mr. Mouter himself looked very pleased to see me; and the first thing that Phemie said, when I crossed the door, was, "Eh, Miss Rechie! how's Annie Orme?"

"Step in, Miss Rechie; the night's cold for the season, and there's a fire on in the parlour," said Mr. Mouter. "I think we're to have a hard winter this year. 'Mony haws, mony snaws,' the proverb says; and when I was up the other day at the Hewan, the bushes were just scarlet with them. You'll feel the east wind in yon house of yours, Miss Rechie?"

"Yes, Mr. Mouter," said I, "it *is* exposed, no doubt; but then there's such a pleasant view, that we put up with the wind."

"Then I hope there's no weak chests among you, Miss Rechie; Miss Annie Orme looks delicate a little," said the young man.

"No such thing, Mr. Mouter," said I; "she's just been particular stout and well all her life, and the spirit that's in her keeps away all the little troubles. Na, Annie Orme, I'm thankful to say, has uncommon health. She's a good lassie: I'm sure if any mortal ever deserved it, its my niece Annie."

"Aye, I would think that," said Mr. Mouter. "She's a sensible, well-conducted young woman."

Well-conducted! That anybody should speak so of my niece, Annie Orme! But it was just the young man's manner of speech; and, besides, he was busy putting up some sugar for little Katie Hislop, a very small bairn, who could not get up to the counter.

"If Annie Orme's delicate, you should see and take her to a safe house, Tammas," said Phemie; "you that have so much interest in her."

It happened just at that moment that I was lifting up little Katie Hislop to put down her coppers on the counter, and to get the sugar; but whenever I set the bairn down again, I said—

"If there was any need of a safer house, my sister Lexie and me would flit in a moment; for, though we've been twenty year and more where we are, I would rather leave the finest house that ever was than risk scathe to Annie Orme."

"Annie Orme's weel off," said Phemie. "The wives say she would make a guid wife, and the lads say she's bonnie, and at hame she's petted like as she was a princess: its a grand thing to be Annie Orme."

"Hold your peace, Phemie," said Mr. Mouter; "be thankful you have not to work for your bread; and see to the house, and dinna speak so much. Yes, I've no doubt Miss Annie would make a grand manager in a house, after all your good training, Miss Rechie; but a plentiful house, you see, with men in it, is different from a scrimpit, genteel family, that has only women—though, to be sure, a good principle is the thing. And, you see, to be a country place, Lasswade is a very dear place: its all with the strangers, Miss Rechie."

"But you have a very good shop, Mr. Mouter," said I; "if the like of you complain about things being dear, what should the poor folk do?"

"Well, the business is not to complain of," said the young man; "but, you see, its not like a secure, settled income, and it takes thrift and management. I'm a careful man myself, Miss Rechie. I aye think the chief quality of a good wife is thrift; but step in bye, and take a rest."

So, as Phemie had gone in to the parlour, and was waving on me with her hand, I went

in at last, and by-and-bye Mr. Mouter came himself, leaving only the little boy in the shop, and we had a crack. Phemie is a fine girl, I believe, but she is ill-mannered; and all the time I was in, she was teazing Thomas about Annie in a way that made me think shame. Besides this, Phemie speaks too much about the lads—far too much.

"If I was the lads," said Phemie, "I'll tell you who I would be jealous of. Oh, I would be jealous of him, Miss Rechie, if I was them! There's no one like him in all Lasswade."

"Phemie, I wish you would learn some sense," said Mr. Mouter.

"And who is this bonnie lad, my dear?" said I.

"Its Robbie, at the Butterbraes. They say the folk remark him in Edinburgh—to see the like of him driving a cart; but its no that he's bonnie, Miss Rechie—its—I canna tell what it is—ask Annie Orme."

"Annie Orme!" said I, "what should Annie know about a lad that's only a servant-man to Mr. Lait?"

"Oh, may-be she doesna *ken*, Miss Rechie; but she looks up when he goes by, as well as other folk," said Phemie Mouter; "and its no that he's bonnie—I've seen folk bonnier—but he just has a look like no other person. Eh, what would a' body think if Robbie turned out a lord, or some grand gentleman in disguise!"

"Dear me," said I; "if there is any chance of that, somebody should speak to Mr. Lait—it should not be allowed."

"Nonsense—nonsense—stuff; would you believe what the like of her takes into her head," said Mr. Mouter, looking angrier than he had any occasion to be. "For my part—"

But what Mr. Mouter thought, for his part, I never heard, seeing somebody came into the shop, and he had to go away.

So I gave him an invitation to call up and see us, and went upon my way likewise. On the road, I turned it over in my own mind with much consideration. This lad, Mr. Mouter, was may-be fully as prudent as it was pleasant to see a young man; and was seeking a wife to take care of himself and his goods and his gear, in a most calculating way, which I did not very well like. Then I fell into a thought about Annie Orme, why we should wish to set her away out of our house, and her the desire of our eyes. We would miss her every hour, not to say every day, and Lexie just as much as me; we would miss the very fash and trouble she sometimes gave us, when she would not be careful about changing her feet on wet days, or consorting with common folk. I am sure the very thought that I would not have her white gown to iron for her in summer, nor her bits of collars and things to keep in order all the year round, was grievous to me. No doubt it was Lexie's doing this present project, and not mine; but still I'll not deny my own weakness. In spite of all the grief we would have missing her, I yet felt that I would like to see her in her own house, and to call her, my niece, Mrs. Mouter. When folk begin to look at their own minds, it is remarkable how they constantly find a contradiction—and so there was with me. My heart sank at the thought of her going, and yet I was both proud and pleased to think that she would go, and be head over a house of her own.

Chapter V.

A week or two passed after that, and we went on just in our ordinary way. Young Mr. Mouter sometimes came up, and sat half an hour, at night; but his discourse was mostly to me, for Lexie was always prim and grave when he came in, and he seldom addressed himself to Annie Orme. Neither was Annie, as I could perceive, the least caring about his company, but just treated him as she did old Mr. Wood, the secession elder, who was our landlord, or any other neighbour not being a young man; for, to tell the truth, Thomas Mouter is not like most young men—there is a sedateness and steadiness about the lad, that might have done much good to Annie; but, no doubt, things are best as they are appointed.

Peter Braird, too, called every now and then; but, indeed, I never could see that the lad heeded about Annie at all, but rather, if he had a notion of anybody, it was me, my own self, seeing I had been kind to him, as he thought, in various little ways. He was just about one-and-twenty, and had never once thought of being married, I believe; while all the time Lexie made out that he was just uncommonly taken up about Annie Orme.

So, two or three weeks went past, and it came to the end of October. The weather was rather cold, but as beautiful and clear as it could be; and the harvest was all well in, and the folk busy in the potato-fields. I like myself to see the gathering of the potatoes—no to say that they are the staff of life to many a one, and that a good year of them is a good year for the poor—there is something cheery, besides, in seeing the women about the fields, and the gallant horses ploughing them up, and the lads whistling behind. Then, I like the fragrance

of the earth itself, and to see the shaw lying half buried in the furrow, with a cluster at the root of it like a cluster of grapes—and much more useful to man and blessed, well I wot. But, not to waste time telling what I like, and what I do not like—it was about this season. The nights were chilling into the winter, and Lexie and me were fain to sit near the fire, being older than we once were.

She was sitting in her own chair, doing white seam—a thing not common with Lexie; for with so much work as we had, it was little profit to us to labour at the plain things, that anybody could do. This, however, was a garment for Annie Orme, which Lexie was making just out of her own head, in a new pattern—and the neatest thing I ever saw. She was sitting, as I say, in her ordinary position, with her back to the window, and her feet on the footstool. My sister Lexie is tall and thin, and has been hard-favoured all her days, like me; but you have just to look at her to see she is not a common person; only she wears high caps, of not a pleasant fashion, and they give a peaked, sharp look to all her face, especially as I saw it in the shadow, now and then giving a bit nod upon the wall.

I was sitting, myself, on the other side of the fire, putting down in my little book some things I had been buying. A low chair suffices me, and I need no footstool; for, as I have before said, I am a little person by nature, and was a slender, too, till I began to turn stout, about fifteen years ago—so that I am not to call in ill-condition now. The candle was standing between us two, and there was a good fire in the grate. Lexie's thread and her scissors were on the table, and over the back of the wooden chair was her shawl, and she had put her bonnet in the big millinery-box; for Lexie had been up at Windlestrae, seeing the family, that afternoon. It was not quite tea-time, but very near it, and I was wondering to myself what could keep Annie Orme, who had gone out with a message in the gloaming, and how it was that I did not hear Beenie setting the cups in the kitchen, when suddenly the door was thrown back to the very wall, with a *thud* which made Lexie (being nervous) jump, and Beenie came fleeing in, crying out to me, "Miss Rechie! Oh, Miss Rechie! here's Miss Annie walking down by the water-side with a grand gentleman!"

You may think how my heart started, and began to beat! But when Beenie saw my sister, I thought she would have fainted; for Beenie was rather feared for my sister, and had come in to tell me this, thinking I was sitting my lane.

So Lexie and I looked each other in the face, without saying a word, and Lexie gripped the linen she had in her hand in a fierce manner, as if she thought it was young Mr. Mouter's hair, and was giving him an awful shake. For I had no doubt it was young Mr. Mouter, Annie having no other joes.

"Dear me, Beenie," said I, "where did you get such a like story—I'll go with you and see; but my niece Annie Orme kens better than to wander about at night with a strange man."

"Sit still where you are, Rechie Sinclair," cried Lexie to me, in a great passion; "and you, Beenie, you born haverel, how dare you tell me such a thing? My niece Annie Orme! Do ye think I'm to believe that she's keeping trystes on the water-side, like ony common person's bairn?"

"If ye please, Miss Lexie, its no my blame; I couldna help seeing them," said Beenie, beginning to cry.

"Annie Orme! Oh, Annie Orme! that I should hear such a story of you!" said my sister; "but Mrs. Braird, at Windlestrae, was not just very stout when I was up this afternoon. It may-be was my niece Annie's cousin, Mr. Peter Braird, that was with her, Beenie, and there would be no ill in that."

"Na—they've a' such red heads," said Beenie, quickly; "I could not have missed kenning wha it was, if I had looked through the bushes at Mr. Peter."

Lexie got up the linen in her hand, as if she could have thrown it at Beenie, in her anger; but, instead of that, she rose, took her shawl from the wooden chair, and her bonnet out of the millinery-box, and put them on, looking with a fierce eye all the time upon me.

"I'll go myself, and see who is with this unfortunate lassie," said Lexie. "If its any friend of yours that you've given encouragement to, out of my knowledge, Rechie, and sacrificed the poor thing, like her mother!—But I'll no permit it—nothing shall make me permit it. She shall be delivered, whatever I have to do. Beenie, follow me. I must be at the bottom of this before another hour."

Feared out of her very senses, Beenie went creeping after my sister, and Lexie turned round as she went out, with a kind of defiance to me, and bade me "keep the house till she came home."

For awhile I sat still, and tried to add up my book—but I was all shaking with having angered Lexie, and with thoughts of what she would say to the poor bairn, and to the decent lad also, whom no doubt it was true I had encouraged—in a way. I have no very great

skill at any time in adding up figures, but now, even though I took great pains, and counted them on my fingers, I could not get on; so at last I thought it was best to shut the book.

After that I sat for awhile just looking into the fire and pondering. There was not a sound in the house—nobody being in—but the clock in the passage ticking steady and slow, like a thing of wood and iron as it was, heeding not a pin that folk were distressed. But bye and bye, as I sat and listened to it in the quiet house, I thought it said "Annie Orme, Annie Orme, Annie Orme," in a voice like a ghost; and in spite of my own sense, and all I could say to myself, I could not help being feared.

Annie Orme—Annie Orme! oh, if the like of me had brought scathe upon the bairn!

So I went away at last, and opened the door very cannily; for though I knew that Lexie was a good distance away, I had still a dread of her hearing me. It was a most beautiful night; just on the other side of the road was a great park, looking dark in the moonlight, and in the hollow below that, was the Esk glimmering out in a bend, and all the angles and corners of the paper-mill rounded with silver. The moon in the skies was like a ship travelling upon the sea. Now and then she sailed away behind a cloud, and you lost wit of her; but then the edging of the cloud would brighten and brighten, and all the mist round it would gleam like fairy lace woven out of silver, and out she came herself, looking you full in the face, as if she had been hiding in play, and was young enough yet to be whiles a bairn, for all her dignity and state. All the time, just before her, as if it were guiding her track, went a little quiet star; it had a solitary, forlorn look about it, as if it knew well that the grand traveller behind would leave no kindly looks for a small light like what it seemed; and so as I stood out in the night, my heart grew wistful and solitary too, and sighs came out from it, or ever I knew—but it was true I had great cause to be anxious about Annie Orme.

I was looking down the road, expecting to see Lexie, and Annie, and young Mr. Mouter, all coming back together—for I could not think my sister would stand out about any pride of her own, if it was to hinder what Annie had set her heart upon—when I saw a dark figure coming up by the hedge, and a little one, crying like to break her heart, following after as fast as she could. "Dear me," said I, "here is Lexie and Beenie back again," and I opened the door wide to let them in, and consoled myself with a thought that Beenie had been mistaken after all, and that whoever was walking by the waterside, it was not Annie Orme.

But my heart misgave me when I saw the moon for a moment shine on Lexie's face, and she passed me on the door-step without a word of what had happened. Beenie came into the house just behind my sister, and you could have heard her at the bridge she grat so loud, "Oh! Miss Rechie, its a' me," said Beenie, and there was a sob at every word—"its a' my wyte for telling upon Miss Annie."

I hurried into the room after my sister, being now really feared; Lexie was putting her bonnet away into the millinery box, and had off her shawl, but she never spoke a word, though she might easy see me standing shaking there, wondering what was the matter. Lexie's lips were closed firm, and she was holding her head up so stiff, that now and then it gave a little nod—I could not bear this any longer.

"Lexie," said I, "say anything you like to me—miscal me as much as you are disposed—but speak to me, Lexie, and be pitiful to the bairn."

"The bairn! the vulgar-minded, low-spirited, unthankful girl! Oh Rechie Sinclair, to think we should have wared our best days upon her, and her following in her mother's steps at last!"

"Lexie, woman! the lad is a very decent lad," said I, "he's no very grand, but he'll be always creditable, and he can keep her well. What way should ye make such a work about it?"

"Rechie, you are a deceived woman," said Lexie, turning full round on me, and looking fierce in my face. "I tell ye, Peter Braird is too good for her—far too good for the notions she has—I kent that—and not only so, but even your man, Thomas Mouter, who keeps a grocery shop, and is auld Sandy Mouter's son—*he's* too good for her, Rechie Sinclair. She's chosen for herself—she's made her ain selection, and woes me that I should see this day."

Saying that, Lexie sat down upon her chair, and turned her face to the wall, and was silent for a time. I saw she was much moved, and that her frame shook, but she would not let wit to me. I laid my hand on her shoulder, and said, "Lexie, woman, dinna vex yoursel," but she shook my hand off with wrath, and would not turn round her head—for Lexie is very proud—it is just her one fault.

When she was done, she drew her chair into its usual place, and looked me in the face once more.

"Well, what were you asking me," said Lexie, sharply.

"I was asking nothing, Lexie; but I would very fain hear indeed," said I, "what it is that has angered ye at Annie—who was with her? —ye might tell *me*."

"Aye, I may tell you, and I'll tell herself before it be long," said my sister, "who was it? Oh Rechie Sinclair! I'm one auld fool, and you're another. We were thinking her a truthful bairn and an obedient, that liked us, and had respect to our opinions—while she's been holding trystes all this time with Robbie at the Butterbraes!"

I was struck silent and dismayed—I could not make answer a single word.

A LADY'S NARRATIVE OF CAPTIVITY AMONG ALGERINE PIRATES.*

But now we had again to face the fearful mob, and once more to endure the same indignities and insults that I have already described. We were almost supported along through the throng of negroes and camels, horses and mules, to the consular dwelling. Entering this by the low door in front, we gained access to an inner court, and were thence conducted to a large room that opened into it. I at once appropriated a sort of couch at one end of the room, and sank upon it, weary and exhausted.

Soon after, the wife of the consul entered; she nodded at me, and passed on to the further end of the apartment. There she threw herself upon a low sofa, made up of mats and rolls of carpetting. Many other ottomans of similar material were scattered around, so that the place had altogether somewhat the aspect of an English carpet warehouse. By the side of the lady's sofa stood the consul's own bed, it also was composed of alternate layers of the same kind of stuff, but it rose to the height of four or five feet from the floor.

The lady herself was to me an object of great curiosity, as she listlessly reclined at the further end of the room. Her person was fat and bulky, and bedizened with gold and silver lace; her countenance hard-favoured and dark, without any vestige of hair about it; and her legs and feet brown and bare, and manacled with heavy anklets of gold. As we were so far asunder, our intercourse for that evening began and ended with the preliminary nod. I did not, however, want amusement, for as soon as I had a little recovered from fatigue, my attention was rivetted to another part of the room. My husband and his host had seated themselves upon an ottoman, before a small writing-table; a feeble lamp illuminated their features sufficiently to show that they were earnestly whispering together in Italian. My husband's sun-burnt face was disturbed and anxious; the Jew's was calm, but full of keen attention. I soon saw enough to tell me that an intrigue was in progress, and as one of the parties appeared to make proposition after proposition cautiously and hesitatingly, I knew that British sovereigns were gradually coming in as auxiliaries to the argument. By slow degrees the countenance of the Jew became complacent, relaxed into a smile, and, at last, nodded in assent. The golden reasons had proved unanswerable—a bribe had been offered and received. My husband had agreed to write the letter to the emperor in accordance with the governor's order, but he had coupled his agreement with the condition that he should write a second letter also, addressing it to the consul general at Tangier, and that the Jew should forward both at the same time, by special couriers, and should have a reward of fifty sovereigns for the service.

By the time that this important business was decided, and the despatches were prepared, it was midnight. Our lady hostess had been all this while asleep upon her rugs and carpets, entirely unconscious of the proceeding that had attracted my attention so painfully, as one that was probably fraught with life or death to us. Now that the affair was concluded, I became sensible that I was in a state of languor and prostration that was almost insupportable. I had fasted for twelve hours, and this, too, after a long period of sea-sickness. I therefore hailed, with unfeigned delight, signs which seemed to indicate that some kind of meal was in the course of preparation. The anticipated refreshment soon appeared; it consisted of pieces of cold black mutton, swimming in oil and garlic, with rue-tea and glasses of half putrid water. All these delicacies were served without bread of any kind. As our stomachs were not yet tamed down to this kind of fare, we immediately asked permission to retire to our mattress. The younger Jew of the blue coat came forward to act as our chamberlain,

* Continued from page 74.

Forget me not!
And when, perchance, thine heart
New passions move,
And thy fond lips impart
To other ears thy love,
Ah! I conjure thee, by the power
Of *my* love, that trying hour—
Forget me not!

Forget me not!
Even if hard fate decree
That I should live,
Severed for aye from thee,
And through long years survive.
Time, in my heart, shall work no change,
Ah! let thine heart, where'er thou range,
Forget me not!

Forget me not!
Yet ere my youth shall pass,
Should Death's chill hand
Shatter for me Life's glass,
And waste its half-run sands;
My latest breath before I die,
Shall to thy spirit fondly sigh,
Forget me not!

Forget me not!
And if, when life is o'er,
The dark way trod,
We meet upon that shore
Where shines the light of God.
Ah! then at last my heart no more,
Of thine shall anxiously implore,
Forget me not!

ANNIE ORME.*

HOW ANNIE ORME WAS SETTLED IN LIFE, AND WHAT WE DID TO HELP IT ON.
BY HER AUNT, MISS RACHEL SINCLAIR, MANTUA-MAKER, LASSWADE.

(Communicated by the Author of "Margaret Maitland," &c. &c.)

CHAPTER VI.

WE sat together in this manner for, I think, about half an hour, waiting till Annie should come in; Lexie with her hands clasped round her knees, gripping them tight, and looking into the fire, without once moving; while I was looking at her, and crying quietly to myself, and aye giving the other look behind me at the door, and listening to every sound without, thinking it might be the footstep of that misguided bairn. I wearied sore for her every minute, and yet when a step passed the door which I had fancied in the distance was hers, I was glad; for even though I could not but condemn her as much as Lexie, I could not bear that she should have the burden of all Lexie's bitter words. Poor thing! poor foolish, misguided thing! to think there could ever be any happiness proceeding out of the like of this—a wooing begun hidelins, with, may-be, deceit, as well as stealth—that I should speak so of Annie Orme! and clean against the known opinions and special wishes of her nearest friends. But I was not angry; I was

* Concluded from page 139.

grieved to my very heart. Neither, I think, was Lexie to call angry; but she could keep up an appearance of it better than me.

At last I did hear her; I could not be mistaken—there was not another foot in Lasswade had music in it like Annie's, and she was singing low, as she came, an old tune. The poor thing! it was "Kind Robin lo'es me," as I discerned when she passed the window; and thankful was I to think that Lexie, having no taste for music, would not notice what it was; but, for myself, I know all the tunes in the country, I think, good or bad.

Beenie, I suppose, had been watching at the door, for Annie came in in a moment, and I never heard her rap. She had taken off her bonnet in the passage, and came in with it swinging in her hand, and her face had a thought more colour than usual, and her eyes were shining as I never saw them shine before. Indeed, she was just looking happy and bright, as it might be supposed she should look, coming in from the clear fresh air of such a night, and did not seem to have a shadow of fear about her.

The first thing that seemed to strike her when she came into the room was the way we were sitting, and the trouble upon our faces. She paused in her singing, and stood still a moment at the door. "Auntie Rechie, is there anything wrong?" said Annie Orme.

"Oh! Annie Orme, my bonnie bairn!" said I, but I could not say another word.

"Put your question to me, Annie Orme—I'll answer you," said Lexie; and come here before me, and lay away your bonnet: you need not spoil the good ribbons, though ye've spoilt a better thing—for I have something to ask of you."

Annie came forward in a surprised way, and laid down her bonnet on the top of the millinery box. I was wringing my hands, and pleading with my sister; but Annie came quietly, and stood before her, crossing her hands like a bairn waiting for its questions, and looking as innocent and peaceable as if she were only going to say Effectual Calling; though I did observe—but it might be only the surprise, and Lexie's look at her—a blush spreading over all her face.

"Annie Orme," said my sister, rising high in her seat, and looking so like a judge that my heart trembled for Annie; "you've heard us speak of your mother, and how she threw herself away, and how she died. Since your mother died, Annie Orme, have you ever felt the want of her? Has anybody grudged you a single thing, if it were even play or pleasure, or the vanities of youth? Has any mortal ever bidden you work except when you liked, or trysted you with any hardship? You've had as good schooling as Lasswade could give you; you're as much thought of as any lady in the place; and I'm sure there's no lady in the place whose garments have gotten so much pains bestowed on them as yours; besides that, your Aunt Rechie there, like a foolish person as she has been all her life, has made herself nothing better than a lady's maid to pleasure you. I ask you, Annie Orme, what you ever wanted that you did not get, or what thing ever was put upon you that you were not pleased with? Do you hear me, Annie Orme?"

"Yes, aunt," said Annie; and now she put her hands behind her, and drooped down her head, but she said not a word more.

"Oh, Lexie!" said I, "have compassion on her; she's little Annie's bairn."

My sister turned her head round to me with a start, and gave me a glance which made me hide my face. "She's little Annie's bairn," said Lexie; "do you mind what Annie Sinclair was, that ye dare to put me in mind of her now? The brightest spirit and the bonniest face in sight of the Pentlands. But what did she do? She went away, and married a man—a man no more to be compared to herself than the Esk water is to the Firth; and his evil ways and his mean manners broke her heart, and she died. We were but girls ourselves, Rechie Sinclair, and Annie was younger than us. But you put me in mind of her when I am here admonishing her daughter. You will make me daft between you. Annie Sinclair lost, and Annie Orme lost—and what's to become of you and me?"

I did not answer; I was crying to myself sore; and Lexie's voice was very shrill and high, as if but for pride she would fain have cried too. But, for all that, I glanced up at Annie Orme; a single tear was stealing down her cheek, and her eyes were full; but she was looking at Lexie steadfastly, and my heart was comforted by her face.

"Aunt Lexie—" said Annie Orme.

"Whisht!" said my sister, "dinna let one evil bring another;—do not say to me, Annie, a word that is not true. Its no story I've heard—I saw it with my own een; and you have been keeping trystes with this man the whole summer through, in spite of his place and yours—in spite of kenning that this was what I could not bear—in spite of our trust in you. It was time, I say, Annie Orme, high time, we had found out what kind of walks you took on the water-side."

Annie put up her hand to her flushed face, and the tears came down one after another, till it was all I could do to keep my arms from her. "Aunt Lexie, dinna be angry," said poor Annie, and there always came the other sob between; "I did not deceive you in my own mind, auntie; and some day you'll no think so ill either of me—or him."

"Of *him!* Preserve me in patience! She dares to name the Butterbraes' hind in such a way to me!" cried Lexie. "Let me ever hear his name again, or that you've said a single word to such a person, and I'll leave this place. Yes, Annie Orme, I vow to you I'll travel away; I'll give up the business, and flit the house, and take ye away to the West Highlands, or into England, over the Lammermuirs, or some other savage place. Ye shall never marry the like of him—ye shall never more speak to the like of him—ye shall never be a hind's wife—or ye'll kill me, Annie Orme."

"No, auntie," said Annie; but I thought her mind was away, and she did not know what she answered.

"Lexie," said I, "dinna be angry; you have let Annie ken what your pleasure is, and she does not rebel. Lexie, let us be good friends now. Annie, my dear, you need not greet. Oh, lassie! ye dinna ken how precious you are to us both!"

"Dinna speak that way, Auntie Rechie—dinna," said Annie Orme, sobbing; "I cannot bear that."

Lexie was sitting still, with her eyes fixed, looking into the fire. "This lad spoke about a license," she said, in a low voice, as if it were only to herself; "of getting a license some time in the summer. This is what our niece meditated, Rechie Sinclair; this is what she would leave our honourable house to do. You spoke about Thomas Mouter, Rechie, and I scorned it; but still you encouraged him. Now you'll get your will, mair than you wanted;—and when ye see Annie Orme mistress of a public, selling drams to every vagabond that passes by, you'll repent opposing me."

I heard at this moment a strange sound from Annie Orme, which did not seem like a sob, and immediately she hurried away.

"No that I'll ever permit the like of that," said my sister, raising her voice; "not that it ever shall be; but he dared to propose this, Rechie Sinclair, and she made no objection. If I had listened longer, I might have heard more; but that was what I could not do. Is she away to her own room, Rechie? She deserves solitude and darkness as well as ever one did; but she's no so strong as some. Take in a light, Rechie, and admonish the reprobate; I'll say no more myself this night."

I saw Lexie's heart was moved. After all, though she looks stern sometimes, Lexie is not hard-hearted, nor ever was. So I went quietly ben to my own room, where Annie had gone, for Annie sleeps with me. As I went in at the door, I heard again the strange sound which was not like a sob; and hurrying to see its cause, what did I find but Annie Orme lying back in the big, old easy-chair, with her hands covering her face, and her cheeks all wet with tears, laughing as I never saw her laugh before. To do her justice, I believe there might, may-be, be something of the affection called hysterical (a thing I do not much understand myself) in this of Annie; but it was a real laugh, and real mischief and fun (at such a time!) were in the eye that glimmered out wet to me, from under the shelter of her hand.

"Annie Orme!" said I; "I could not have believed this of you."

"Oh! I think shame of myself for laughing," said Annie; "but I cannot help it—indeed, I cannot help it; you would laugh yourself, if you kent. It was that last thing my Aunt Lexie said."

"Was that about the license?" said I. "Indeed, Annie, it vexes me that you can laugh at that; for a public-house would be a strange place for you. Is it not for a public-house? What is it for? Aye, Annie, now I mind, young Mr. Mouter has a license for simple tea and sugar. If it was that, it would not be so bad; but what tempted ye, woman, when there are plenty lads round about, in your ain degree, to take up with Robbie at the Butterbraes? The like of him!"

"Aunt!" said Annie Orme; "but *you* must not be angry, Aunt Rechie; no, indeed, I cannot bear that; and I meant to tell you, by-and-bye—or he meant himself—"

"Dear me, Annie," said I; "you must give him up—you must not speak to him more—or it will kill Lexie."

"Must I, aunt?" said Annie; "may-be—but I am not sure about that."

"Annie Orme! you'll have to promise. Woman, think of young Mr. Mouter and his fine business," said I. "Mind I am as much in earnest as Lexie; will you promise me, Annie, never to see him more?"

"He's to go away to-morrow, aunt," said Annie; "but I'll no promise—whisht, Auntie Rechie—you wouldna have me break his heart."

"Men's hearts are no so easy broken, Annie,"

said I, "never you be feared; and, besides, he's only a servant man. Annie, Annie, think what you're doing."

Instead of answering me by reasonable arguments, she came away close to me, and put her arms round my neck; so that, before I was aware, I found myself speaking as if I was quite pleased with Robbie, and ready to take him into the family in a minute. I am far too easy in my disposition—far too yielding—as Lexie has told me many a time; but I am too old to mend now.

Chapter VII.

It was a very quiet night that, with us. Annie sat silent at her seam, and never lifted her eyes; and except that Lexie now and then gave a groan, and me sometimes a sigh, I think there was scarcely a sound in the room. My sister was much softened to see Annie so quiet; but Annie, as I think, was occupied with other cogitations besides grief for our displeasure;—it was natural, poor thing—and it was not to be denied that this Robbie was a wise-like lad.

When I went into my own room, after having had a conversation with Lexie, I found Annie Orme not in her bed, though she had left the parlour about an hour before. When I came in, she had a little book in her hand, which she put away in a great hurry—no doubt it was some keepsake—so I asked no questions about it.

"Now, Annie," said I, having just been speaking to Lexie about the whole matter, "you must have a stout heart for this, my dear. You've done a very wrong thing in taking up with this young man, and you must be done with him, Annie Orme. Mind, I've seen your mother break her heart, because she did not take good advice, and break off in time. Its an awful undertaking, Annie, the like of this. Many a thing else you may make a mistake in, but everything else can be mended; and, Annie, Annie, my dear, just you think what a desolate thing it must be to repent after its done, when nothing in this world can deliver you except death, which it is a sin to seek for yourself, let alone another."

"But, auntie, there is no need for ever repenting, either before or after," said Annie, looking a little angry.

"Annie," said I, "when folk are not equal, they're never happy. A poor serving lad, with no culture or breeding, and the like of you, Annie Orme—I cannot think of it."

"But Robbie is not a common serving lad; Robbie is—" When Annie had said this, she stopped, and laughed out; so that I was feared Lexie would hear her.

"Robbie is better than his neighbours—no doubt you think so, Annie," said I; "but wait a little till he grows a coarse man, and you're married upon him. Mind, I'm only supposing a thing that's never to happen; for neither Lexie nor me would ever consent to it."

Annie put her arms round my neck again, and leaned her head upon my shoulder. She did not speak a word except "Bonnie auntie!" but what could I say to her after that. She used to call me "bonnie auntie," when she was a little bairn, and wanted something; I aye yielded then, and I am feared I never will learn to refuse anything to Annie Orme.

Just as we were standing in this way, speaking about him, and me myself (being a fool, and nothing else) praising Robbie, and saying what a wise-like lad he was, we heard Lexie's foot in the passage. Both of us started and ran—me to begin to take off my net-cap, and Annie to hide herself behind the curtains, for fear her aunt should see that she was not sleeping.

"Rechie," said my sister, very low, just looking in at the door—and, seeing she waved upon me with her hand, I went out to her; and what do you think Lexie had brought—I said she was not hard-hearted—that I, knowing her so well, should say the like of that!—I ought to have told the real truth, that there scarcely ever was as kind a heart and as good a head as Lexie's put together, in spite of all she has had to vex her, poor woman, one time and another, all her life through.

She was carrying in her hand the little pink china jug full of negus, which she had just been making with her own hands in the kitchen.

"Is Annie sleeping?" said my sister.

"How do you think she could sleep, Lexie," said I, "after what has happened this night."

"Poor thing!" said Lexie, "though she's done anything but her duty to us, we must not fail, Rechie, of our duty to her. Make her take this—it'll do her good; and if you think she's feverish, give her some out of this bottle. She can expect nothing else, after her behaviour; but I would not have her ill either, if I could help it. Try and get her to sleep, Rechie; I must speak to her the morn."

And with a sigh Lexie went away.

When I went to Annie Orme, she had hidden her face in the pillow, and was crying bitterly; I had near cried myself; for though Lexie

looked hard sometimes, it was strange to see the tenderness and mindfulness of her, even when she had been greatly angered.

The next morning, I went out early to do some errands, and left my sister and Annie alone. I had a fear about it; but still, after all, I thought it best.

Just on the bridge, I met Robbie; I scarcely knew him, for he had on his Sabbath dress, and looked in every way liker a laird than a hind. He was carrying a box with his things—honest man, it was not a very heavy one—and when he saw me, he stopped to speak to me, though he had never done it before.

"I am going away, Miss Rechie," said Robbie; "and though I am not going far, and its better for me, I am sorry to leave Lasswade."

"How far are you going?" said I—but I could not call him Robbie, and I did not know his last name.

"Only to Edinburgh," he said; "I am waiting to put my box on the coach, but I'll walk myself. Good-bye, Miss Rechie; you'll may-be hear of me again."

He held out his hand, and I gave him mine—him a common serving lad! He lifted his hat to me when he went away—neither Thomas Mouter nor Peter Braird would have done more than nodded—and I stood still and looked after him. It did not look like his Sabbath dress; he was as easy in it as I am in my old green merino gown; and, indeed, I did not wonder at Annie, for he was just as little like a farm servant as Thomas Strang, the smith (I could see the red glow of the smiddy, and half a dozen boys round it, at the corner of the street—that is what put him into my mind), was like a minister.

I went up all the way home, thinking of what Phemie Mouter said. He might be a great gentleman, or even a lord in disguise; but I soon saw that was not likely, for he had no motive; and though a great lord might pretend to be a landscape painter, as Annie was reading to me in a ballad the other day, I have great doubts whether it would be as good diversion to pretend to be a farmer's man.

Chapter VIII.

"Miss Rechie," said young Mr. Mouter, "will you come in to your tea to-morrow night—you and Miss Annie Orme? It's the last night of the year, you know—Hogmenay, as the bairns call it—and there will be just one or two more—all neighbours, Miss Rechie."

"Well, Mr. Mouter," said I, "I am sure I have no objection; we'll see what Annie says."

I have passed over all the time between October and the end of the year, because there was nothing in it of moment to anybody. We were all going about in our ordinary way, and nothing had happened in the town but what happens every day—a bairn coming home here and there, and an old person dropping off like the last leaves. And touching Robbie nothing was now said, he having clean departed, and nobody in Lasswade, as it seemed, minding about him at all; so that Lexie was again keen about Peter Braird, and I, I confess, began to think that young Mr. Mouter had a chance after all. So I ironed Annie's best collar and her fine sewed cuffs, that she got in a present, and made her put on her new blue merino, with a ribbon round the waist; and, having made up my own good cap, we dressed ourselves, and went down to Mr. Mouter's to our tea. It was not very cold for the season, so that it was pleasant going down the road, seeing the lights shining through the windows, and hearing the bairns singing at the doors. Little Katie Hislop has a miracle of a voice for singing, and she is so very wee a thing, that you cannot believe when you hear it, that such a wonderful sound is coming from a creature that you could almost hold in your hand. There she was, poor little thing, with an old table-cloth tied round about her waist, half full of oat-cakes, and slices of bread, and bits of short-bread, standing at Mrs. Thomson's window, singing one of the longest Hogmenay rhymes—or, rather, it was two or three of them joined together, and sung at the very height of her voice. There were two or three more with her, and just as they ended—

> "But we are bairns come out to play,
> Get up and gi'es our Hogmenay."

Mrs. Thomson opened the window, and gave them I cannot tell how many cakes and scones, and a great lump of fine, rich short-bread to Katie herself.

"Now, we'll go to Mr. Mouter's, and then we'll gang hame," said Tomima Hislop, Katie's big sister; "we needna bide lang there—*he'll* no gie us ony short-bread. Katie, sing."

But they scarcely waited to sing—they just gathered about the door in a cluster, and cried,

> "My feet's cauld, my shoon's thin,
> Give me a piece, and let me rin,"

when they all ran away; but whether it was that Mr. Mouter had the cakes ready for them, or whether they were feared to face him (being so sedate a young man), I cannot tell.

"You see, auntie, the bairns ken," said Annie Orme to me; "they would not have run that way from our door."

"Nor from your door either, my dear," said I, "when you have a house of your own; but how is a man to ken?"

The table in Mr. Mouter's parlour was set out very fine, with beautiful china, and silver teaspoons, marked all T. M., his own initials—I thought to myself, if he got Annie, they would have plenty of silver things to begin with; for I knew my sister would not let her go to her own house without a good dozen of spoons—and there was short-bread and a great rich bun, and biscuits and bread of every kind. For company, there was Annie and me, and the two Miss Thomsons, and young William Wood and his wife, besides Phemie and Nicol, and Mr. Mouter himself.

"When are we to hear of a mistress to this fine house of yours, Mr. Mouter?" said young Mrs. Wood. "Its a pity to see such a bonnie little room, and no a wife to put into it: we have been looking for it these three months and more."

"Its a serious business; I am not a man that undertakes anything rashly; but there's no saying, ladies—there's no saying," said Mr. Mouter, briskly; and he looked straight round at Annie.

What did Annie do, think you? I was feared she would have laughed: instead of that, she held up her head, and asked Mr. Wood, as grave as if she had been Lexie, when he was last in Edinburgh.

"When I was last in Edinburgh," said Mr. Wood, "you'll no guess, Miss Annie, who I saw. Do you mind the young man that used to drive the Butterbraes' cart? Robbie something—but I never heard his last name. Well, I met him in a little street near the college, dressed in black, as well as anybody need be, and walking with a gentleman. I never was more astonished; but I did not speak to him, for I thought, if he had got any rise in the world, he would not like to be minded that he was once only a servant-man."

"It was very thoughtful of you, Mr. Wood," said I.

"Eh, and was't Robbie?" said Phemie Mouter, "what way did you no follow him, Mr. Wood? *I* would have gaen step for step, if it had been five miles—and there's nae saying what grand house he might have led you to in the end."

"Dear me, will somebody have left him siller?" said Miss Christina Thomson.

But Annie Orme never spoke a word, though when I looked at her, I saw her eyes dancing, and such a crowd of smiles into every line of her face, that my heart was moved to see her pleasure. The two Miss Thomsons were come of very comfortable folk, and would both have portions—so would Phemie Mouter; but when I looked at Annie Orme, I could not help seeing the difference, though Annie would have no portion, and was an orphan, poor thing, with only two single women, Lexie and me, all the friends she had in the world.

And as I thought upon my sister, the water came into my eyes. When did Lexie seek a pleasure to herself, or when did she spare herself an hour's work that was to better one of us? I have worked with her all my days—it may be thought I am taking a share of the honour, but anybody that knows me may know it is not so. Many a one has thought Lexie hard, even when she was toiling for them, and I question if any mortal but me, so much as guesses what kind of heart she has, or, indeed, if she knows herself.

And there was Annie Orme—little wonder that we were both proud of her—little wonder that we both would have had her well wedded, if we could; but the lad she liked best herself—what if he did turn out some great man after all?

"Annie," said I, when we were on our road home, "is this lad, Robbie, a greater person than he looks? tell me, is he some rich gentleman guisarding in this fashion? for, if he is, I'll tell Lexie, and we must instantly leave this place, and never be within knowledge of him more."

"No, auntie, he is not a great gentleman," said Annie Orme, "no, he's may-be no quite what he looked like, but he's a true man; and by and bye he'll tell you everything himself—but you're no to ask me."

I was confused and bewildered, I could not tell what to think.

When we got home we heard a sound of voices in the parlour, and there was Peter Braird sitting with my sister. He had been getting a glass of wine—Lexie never offers folks drams—and there was a plate of our new-year's short-bread on the table.

"Dear me, Mr. Peter," said I, "are you going up to Windlestrae at this time of night."

Peter gave a great laugh, and turned red in the face, "I want to be somebody's first-foot in Lasswade here; I came out on purpose; but I'm not going home to night, Miss Rechie."

"Well," said I, "you are paying somebody a great compliment, coming out all the way on a cold night. Who is it, Mr. Peter?"

"Every thing in its right time, Rechie," said my sister, who was looking uncommonly pleased. It was clear that Lexie expected that he had come to be first-foot to Annie Orme.

"I met a gentleman on the South-bridge the other day, Miss Rechie," said Peter, "and he asked kindly for you. He used to give me a lift in his cart, sometimes, on the Saturday nights, when I was coming home wearied, and a fine lad he is—Robert Scott—you mind him?—he was at the Butterbraes."

"And, Mr. Peter, do you keep company with the like of him?" said my sister, with a kind of horror.

"When I met him he was better dressed than me," said Peter, looking down upon his own coat, which was not quite so well brushed as it might have been, "and I am sure he speaks as good English; but I don't just to call keep company with him, Miss Lexie, for I never saw him but this once."

"Let not the name of any such person be mentioned to me again," said Lexie, "what do I care about his good dress—if somebody had even left him a fortune, what would he be for all that, but an uncultivated hind? No, Mr. Peter, as a man's breeding is, so is he—you may take my word for that."

"But its past eleven, and I'll have to be on the watch, or I'll be cheated after all," said the young man, "and I said I would let nobody be before me. Good-night to ye all, and a happy new-year when it comes; don't say I was here, Miss Lexie, if my mother comes down the morn."

Saying which, Peter went away, to the great astonishment of my sister, who tried to persuade herself he was coming back again after all. But I knew very well that Peter Braird cared nothing about Annie Orme—the great red-headed lout—as if *he* had discrimination for that.

When Annie went ben the house, to tell Beenie that she was to come to the parlour just before the clock struck twelve, and get a spoonful of toddy, and a bit short-bread, and wish us a good new-year, as was our custom, Lexie looked up to me with a concerned face.

"Rechie," said my sister, "do you believe that Annie is still thinking about that lad?"

"I do not ken, Lexie," said I—for I durst not say an untruth either one way or the other.

"They tell me he's to be seen in Edinburgh, well put on, and like a gentleman—a gentleman!—as if dress was all that was needed for that. He'll be taking his new trade by the hand, Rechie—just you see if I am not a sooth prophet—he'll have got somebody to lend him siller, and before we ken where we are, he'll be setting up an inn or public-house at our very doors, and asking us for Annie. I'll never consent—no, if it killed me to refuse, Rechie Sinclair, I'll never consent to the like of that!"

"There's worse things than keeping an inn, if he had got that length," said I, "and, besides, Lexie, folk need licenses for many an innocent trade; it might be only a grocery shop—it might be—"

"Never let me hear his name again," cried out my sister, and at that moment the clock warned twelve, and Annie and Beenie came into the parlour, and there was not a word more spoken till after the twelve strokes of the clock, when every one of us wished the other a happy new-year.

But no first-foot crossed our door-stone that night.

Chapter IX.

About three or four months after that—it was in April, and pleasant weather—there came a letter to us one day, inquiring if the two of us—being addressed just as "Misses Sinclair, Lasswade"—were called by the christian names of Alexina and Rachel, and were of kin to one Ninian Sinclair, dead in London, who had willed—being a poor old solitary man, though he left a great sum behind him—a legacy of a hundred and fifty pounds to the two daughters of his cousin, Johnstone Sinclair, of Lasswade. Now this being our father, and these being our names, besides that we knew of a cousin Ninian he had in London, Lexie immediately wrote to the law gentleman, in Edinburgh, who asked the question, saying it was us; and there came back an answer from him, telling some ceremonies he would have to go through, and appointing a day for us to come to his office to receive the legacy.

It is not to be supposed we could hear of a great sum like this without some elevation of spirit, and Lexie said immediately to me, "this will furnish a house for Annie Orme," and we were as glad about it as we could be about money. We put on blacks, of course, for the poor old man—I call him poor, not because he was dead, but because he had departed without one to grieve for him—and I thought it in a measure right to mention to folk who we were in mourning for, and what he was, just that he might not be defrauded altogether of some natural notice by the living, of the great end he had undergone.

Just a day or two after this, Annie came in

one day, in a great haste, and ran into the parlour breathless. And what was this but to tell us that Peter Braird and Phemie Mouter had run away together, and had come back married folk, and were even now coming up the town with white gloves and white ribbons, on their road to Windlestrae—though what kind of reception they would get there I cannot tell.

I ran to the door in a minute, to wish them joy; but Lexie sat still in her chair, and would not move, and I saw she was just shaking. I was sorry for Lexie, for she had aye thought so much of this lad, though I did wonder how she could ever even the like of him to Annie Orme.

When the two young fools and their train had passed—for they were behaving just like foolish persons, Peter, especially, looking half out of his senses, though Phemie behaved a little better—and we were back again into the parlour, and at our work, Lexie sat silent for a long time, after which she began to speak to Annie Orme, and to call her "my dear"—a thing most uncommon for Lexie—as if she thought the news about Peter Braird would be a disappointment to Annie.

"I have been thinking, Rechie," said my sister, "that this poor bairn, Annie Orme, is held far too close to one place, and that a change would do her good. So it struck me, that when we went into Edinburgh for this siller, we might take a room for a day or two at Miss Clephane's, and take Annie with us, and just go about and see what was to be seen. May-be, if there was a very beautiful, quiet day, we might go across to Fife, and back again, for a sail, and just let Annie have a little pleasure like others of her age, poor thing."

"Thank you, Aunt Lexie," said Annie, "I should be very glad."

"Would you be very glad, my dear? then we'll go, Annie, and you may think that settled, for ill would I like this day to refuse you anything that would make you glad, my poor bairn."

Oh, Annie Orme! the tear was in your eye for my sister's kindness, but the laugh was on your lip for her decciving herself. Do you think I did not see the half-dimple on your cheek, or do you think I did not know that you were no more disappointed about Peter Braird than I was?—you need not deny it, Annie Orme.

So it was settled, that on the Friday next—that was a week from the time we were speaking—we should all go into Edinburgh, and that we should stay, perhaps, a week away from home.

That same night, Annie went out to get a walk by herself, for I was busy; and not long after she went away, I heard a rap at the door, and immediately Beenie showed in Mr. Mouter into the parlour. He was dressed more carefully than usual, and had a white lily of the valley in his button hole, and white gloves in his hand—but being a careful lad he had not put them on.

He got a very cold reception from Lexie; so, thinking myself bound to pay more attention to him on that account, and having, besides, aye an idea that he might turn out Annie's goodman after all, I was very kind to him, and we began to speak about what had happened in the morning.

"It could not be a greater surprise to you, than it was to me, Miss Rechie," said Mr. Mouter. "I have observed some stir going on for a day or two—bits of white ribbon lying about, and frills and collars, and things of that kind, which I suppose Phemie had gotten from Nicol, who is very careless of his money, like most seafaring men; but when there was no appearance of her at breakfast-time this morning, I thought she had gone in to Mrs. Thomson's, or was standing havering with some of the women about, and never troubled myself on the subject. As the day went past, I got more anxious, but still I thought it was only Phemie's nonsense; so you may judge how I was struck when I saw a post chaise stop at Mr. Trotter's door, and out of it came a couple in white gloves. My first thought was, that they were strangers, and I went to the door to see—when, behold! who was it but Phemie Mouter and young Windlestrae."

"Not young Windlestrae; Sinclair Braird is married upon a gentlewoman like himself," said Lexie, sharply, "you mean Windlestrae's young son, that silly callant, Peter, Mr. Mouter."

"Silly, or no silly, he's my brother-in-law, Miss Lexie," said Mr. Mouter, a little ill-pleased, "and I would not like to hear him spoken of otherwise than civilly."

"He was my second cousin's son twenty years before he was your brother-in-law, Mr. Mouter," returned my sister, "and one of the family may speak, as I believe, from her ain knowledge, without asking any permission from a fremd person. Windlestrae, poor man, will be tried this day—I must go up to-morrow and ask for the family."

"For you see, Mr. Mouter," said I, being feared for Lexie hurting his feelings, "a marriage like this is a trial to both the families, both his and hers. If they had only been prudent, the rash young things, and let their

friends ken, and have a right wedding for them—but no doubt it will save much trouble if it does nothing else."

"It brings things to a point with me, Miss Rechie," said the young man, "I cannot do without some woman person in my house; for you see, I am a man by nature who cannot endure waste, and the shop takes me up often, and prevents me looking after things. It is true, Phemie was no great help, but still she was aye there. Now, to tell the truth, I want a wife, and I want a thrifty, quiet one, that will not be extravagant, but take care of the siller after its made, and spend it with discretion. There's your own niece, Annie Orme, Miss Lexie and Miss Rechie—if you'll assure me of your consent, I'll speak to her. My business is a good business, and a steady man can make it better; but if there's any chance of your making objections, I'll no speak to the young lady, for I never like to raise hopes that are not to be fulfilled; for this reason I thought it best to speak to you first."

For a moment there was perfect silence in the room—you might have heard a feather fall, for I durst not speak, though he was waiting for an answer.

"Does my niece, *Miss* Annie Orme, ken how much you think of her, Mr. Mouter," said Lexie, in a voice of suppressed anger, which, I suppose, sounded quite quiet to the stranger.

"Well, Miss Lexie, I cannot say," said Mr. Mouter, "I am a prudent man by nature; I never put out my hand farther than I can draw it back, and not being quite sure about myself, not to speak of you, I never said anything to Miss Annie—but she may have guessed."

"Here she is herself, we'll ask her," said Lexie, very quietly.

The poor young man rose up; "No, no," said he, "if she's to be asked, I'll ask her myself;" but before he could say another word, Annie was in the room.

"Mr. Mouter's sister has married Peter Braird, of Windlestrae, Annie, my dear," said Lexie, "and Mr. Mouter, there, thinks you would make a good wife to him. Now, Annie, I'll let you give the answer for your own hand; would you like to marry this young man, my dear."

Poor Annie's cheeks grew like crimson; I never saw such a face, and I thought she would have fallen down; but glancing at Mr. Mouter, and seeing him pull his white gloves through his hands, dirtying them far more than if he had put them on, the dimple formed in her cheek again, and she just said, "No, auntie, I would not," and ran from the room.

"Miss Lexie, you've used me very ill," said Mr. Mouter, "I can never look over the like of this. You think I'm not good enough for Annie Orme? very well, we'll see; I would have made her Mrs. Mouter if you had given me civil treatment. Now, though I know very well she does not mean to be ruled by what she said just now, yet I'll be held by it, Miss Lexie Sinclair; and I can tell you I think myself as good as your niece any day, or better, if the truth were told. I wish you good evening, Miss Rechie; you need never hope to see me in this house again, grand as you think it; for I can do better than a poor mantua-maker, before I go a dozen steps, and when that girl, Annie, is an old maid like yourselves, you'll repent the way you've used me."

Saying that, he flung open the parlour door and went away. "I am very sorry, Mr. Mouter," said I, "you see Lexie's that proud—to be sure she has a good reason—but if you like to speak to Annie herself"—

"That's past, that's past, Miss Rechie," said Mr. Mouter, waving his hand, "if she went down on her knees to me, I could not look over this."

"Which she never will do, be you sure of that," said I, in haste, "not if you were a king, instead of having a grocery shop; and its a comfort to think she would not have taken you after all."

I said this last low, and he did not hear me; but, indeed, I came in in a fever at him and Lexie, not knowing which had made me most angry; but then I minded that nobody had so good a right as Lexie to dispose of Annie Orme, and that the young man was not seeking her because he liked her, but because she would make a thrifty wife. Now I had no doubt Annie would make a good wife, if she had a little time to get douce and settled—but a *thrifty* one—alack a day!

Chapter X.

For the whole next day, Lexie was much cogitating in her own mind, and scarcely spoke a word to anybody; but in the evening, as she was standing at the door for a mouthful of air, Annie having again gone out (Annie had really turned very fond of being out at nights), young Dr. Jamieson stopped his horse at the door to speak to us, and after asking very kindly for her and me, how we were, made particular inquiry for Annie Orme. When he rode away, I saw the face of Lexie was full of meaning, and so waited till she should speak.

"Rechie," said my sister, at last, "Annie Orme now will have a tocher."

"And not a bad one, Lexie," said I, "for the like of us."

It was just dusk, and there was a kind of grey, quiet light coming down out of the sky, where the clouds lay motionless, like far-off lands sleeping by the sea. Some of them had just touches upon them of the sun here and there, and some of them were dark and round, as if they projected out of the blue, and some of them were white and soft like masses of down; in among them was a star or two. It looked to myself, being pondering, as if it was the golden streets of Jerusalem, with the evening lamps lighted here and there, and that we in this world could only get this one glance at them before the deep night came over us, and gave us our lawful sleep. And then my thoughts went away from me, up to what *they* were doing, who went about the streets of Jerusalem where the lights were lighted yonder; and I thought of what the prophet says of grey-headed men leaning upon their staffs, and bairns playing in that city, and the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride; and then I marvelled if the folk yonder might ever win to the walls or to the gates, to look down on the old country far below, and what they thought of it now. And from that my mind wandered to little Annie, and the way she used to cry our names from our old threshold stone; and I looked away over the water, to the side of the brae that glimmered up among the clouds, and I almost thought that if I had been on the road, I could have seen Annie at the door, with her arm round the neck of our dog, Warlock, and him giving aye his little bark when she cried, "Lexie, Rechie," and my mother busy in the room, and now and then passing by the door. I gave a long sigh as my heart returned to me, and my sister must have been thinking the same, for she sighed too. "Its like one of the old nights langsyne, Rechie," said my sister to me.

And then we both gave another sigh; and then, for my part, the tears came to my eyes, and I bade Lexie come in, and we would get a light and take our seams again.

Being returned, Lexie began to speak again about what she was saying before.

"Rechie," she said, "my mind is not changed, though neither you nor me judged discreetly about the proper person—but we'll no controvert that any more. There's that young man that was speaking to us this moment, Rechie—that's a fine lad, and a good son, and a person that nobody could make any objections to—I would be content with him for Annie."

"Dr. Jamieson? but he'll be looking for higher than our Annie, Lexie," said I.

"I would like to ken how he could look higher, or in what respect?" said my sister. "If it were for good looks, Annie Orme is what I call bonnie; and she'll have as much as furnish a good house, and she's come of most creditable people. So, I say, Rechie, we must be civil to the doctor, and ask him to call and see us, for I see nobody in Lasswade that would be as suitable for Annie Orme."

At this moment, Annie herself came into the room.

"You have been long out, Annie Orme," said I, "where have you been? you should take your walks through the day, and no at night."

"I have been just at the waterside again, aunt Rechie," said Annie Orme.

Something in the tone of her voice made both Lexie and me look up. I never saw so happy a face; one smile was coming close on the step of another, and there was a wavering colour upon her cheeks, which rose and fell, and her eyes were giving shy, sudden glances here and there, from under the cast down eyelids, and her breath came a little fast and short, so that you saw her heart was beating quick.

"Dear me, Annie," said I, "was there any body with you by the waterside?"

The next moment I repented having said that, for Lexie saw what I meant, and her face grew red, and she stopped her work and looked at Annie with a knitted brow. Annie never noticed this; she gave a low laugh, twisted the strings of her bonnet, and said to me, "I met Helen Lyon, auntie," and then went quick away to her own room.

I dared not look at Lexie; for to tell the truth, I felt almost sure, within myself, that Annie Orme had been holding a meeting with Robbie, from the Butterbraes.

"Rechie," said my sister, solemnly, "you'll see if I do not speak true. She's dealing unfaithfully with us; see if that hind lad does not come to us, to dishonour our house with his mean proposals. I am as sure as if I had seen them, that Annie met him this night, and the first word of such a thing that's minted to me, I'll take my staff in my hand, and this misguided thing by the arm, and journey away to some strange place—for I'll no bear it. To see Annie Orme serving strangers, and filling measures, and taking pennies and sixpences, from the meanest passer by—it would kill me, Rechie Sinclair!"

Well, if it would have killed Lexie, it maybe was even greater pain to me; for you see, I

stood between the two, and had sympathy with both, and sorrowed with both in my own spirit, feeling that I could not bear this any more than Lexie, and yet in my heart yearning with pity over the ill-advised bairn. You may believe, too, what a start I was thrown into, when the candle being put out, and me laid down, Annie Orme crept into my arms, and whispered to me, "He's got his license, Auntie Rechie."

"Oh, bairn, bairn!" said I, "do you tell me that;" and I thought I would have broken my heart.

Chapter XI.

Now whether it was a natural perverseness of circumstances, such as I have sometimes seen, or whether it was really a sudden liking, I cannot tell, but of this I am certain, Dr. Jamieson called upon us within two days of the time I have mentioned, of his own accord, and told us that our father's cousin, Ninian, was also a far-away cousin of a friend of his, to whom some of the old man's money had likewise come. The doctor was a very pleasant lad, good at conversation, and of a cheerful nature; and I could not help thinking that Lexie would have done better if she had made as discreet a choice the first time, instead of setting her heart upon Peter Braird; but I saw at once, that it would be nonsense ever dreaming about it; for, seeing he was received among some of the gentry and the rich gentlemen farmers, and had money and an inheritance himself, was it ever to be supposed that he would come courting to Annie Orme?

However, I had to keep my thoughts to myself, for Lexie was greatly exalted about Dr. Jamieson, and pressed him to come back again, which he said he would do. And ever after that, Lexie was both anxious and angry if she saw so much as a smile on the face of Annie Orme, and would have done some ill to Robbie, I believe, if he had been so rash as to come to our door.

But the week passed, and we heard no word of him. And who do you think was cried in Lasswade kirk upon the Sabbath-day? who but young Mr. Mouter and Miss Christina Thomson! I could not believe but the precentor was out of his senses when he said the names.

Upon the next Friday, according to our arrangement, having put up a supply of things in the little black trunk, and all our best bonnets in a big box, and tea and sugar for a week in a little basket, we took the coach, and went into Edinburgh. The place we were to lodge at was Miss Clephane's, where Lexie had learned the milinery. It was up a long stair, near the end of the Cannongate, and close to the palace, and we could see the sentries at the gate from our windows, and Arthur's Seat beyond. Miss Clephane was then an old woman, and had given up the business, and lived on her money, just letting a room now and then, and like us she had a niece living with her; but Miss Rosie Clephane was nearly as old as me, and very tall, and as thin as Lexie, so there could not possibly be any comparison made between her and Annie Orme.

They were speaking much at this time about some students who had lodged with them, who were done with their time at college, and now were preachers, ready for kirks, and waiting on them. One of the first things Annie said, when we got to Edinburgh, was, that she wanted to go to one particular church, and no other, a thing which surprised me, seeing that Annie did not commonly express so very clear a will of her own; but as the minister there was a great man, and well worth hearing, neither Lexie nor me made any objection. On speaking about it to Miss Rosie, we discovered that she went there too, so we made up our minds to go altogether, to Annie's great good pleasure; though what special interest she had in it, I could not, with all my skill, make out or perceive.

On the Saturday, we took Annie to see the palace and the castle, and let her out by herself at night—on her promising not to stay long—to go up as far as St. Anthony's chapel. She came in as blooming and happy-like as could be, and I never was prouder of her—though it did not become me on a Sabbath!—than when I fastened her white gown the next morning, and watched her put on her new bonnet with the white and lilac ribbon, which I choose for her myself. You never saw a fresher, bonnier face in Edinburgh or out of it; and she looked as like a lady, I am bound to say, as any one we met, though we passed through some of the grandest streets in the town, on our way to the kirk that day.

Chapter XII.

I like to see folk coming into a church. If we are there a quarter of an hour too soon, Lexie always reads her Bible without ever lifting her head, and makes Annie Orme do the same; but, for my part, I like to notice everybody that comes in, and to see who of a

family is at the kirk and who is not, and just to take a kindly look of them all. So it happened, being busy looking at all the strange folk, I never glanced up at the pulpit at all, till the psalm was given out, and then I had to hurry to find the place in a very small-printed Psalm-book; besides, I was particularly taken up with Annie Orme, who let fall her Bible a dozen times, I am sure, if she did it once, and grew red and white, and put up her handkerchief to her face, till I grew very anxious, and thought she was ill; I asked her, and said, I would go home with her, if she liked; but Annie answered, "No, no," and let fall her book again. So immediately it came into my head, that may-be she had seen Robbie in the church, and I looked round and round, and lost my own place, and missed the psalm-singing, hunting through the kirk for him; but I could see him nowhere.

What blind inconsiderate mortals we are after all; I was within half-an-hour of what made my heart stir with thanksgiving, and I knew it not.

All through the prayer I was concerned about Annie; I scarcely could attend to it for my trouble about her, which was a great sin in me. So we sat down again, and I was looking into Annie's face once more, and asking if she were unwell, when I heard the click of Lexie's glasses—Lexie is very short-sighted—as she put them on to look up at the minister, and wait for the text. But before there was a word of the text—you may think how I started, both my heart and me, when Lexie suddenly threw up her arms, and gave a cry, which made me think she had fainted. I started from Annie, and turned to my sister, who was on my other side. "Are you ill, Lexie?" whispered I, and there was great drops hanging on my brow with fear.

"Rechie Sinclair, I'm a fuil," said my sister, and she panted for her breath. "Look up yonder—up yonder, ye foolish person, I tell ye—its Robbie, from the Butterbraes!"

I looked up; what did I see? past the long pulpit stairs, past the precentor's desk—there, with his minister's gown upon him, and his fine blacks and white neckcloth, bending his head over the big Bible, in the very pulpit itself, was the same Robbie that took off his hat to me on Lasswade-bridge, and that we did not think good enough for Annie Orme!

I sat there with my mouth open and my eyes—I could not believe my very sight—and at the same time I was half distracted with the constant click of Lexie's glasses, as she put them on and took them off, and did not rest still for a single moment. Also, Annie Orme had hidden her face low down in her hands, and I could feel by the motion of her, being close to my side, that she was crying with all her might. But I could not say a word—I could not do a single thing, but sit with my eyes staring wide open upon Robbie Scott.

Bless me, to think of that—to think of that! But bye and bye I noticed that his voice was shaking, and I steadied myself as well as I could, that the poor lad might not lose his fortitude by looking upon us; I have no doubt it was a grand sermon—not the least doubt—but what it was about at this moment I am not prepared to say.

"Do you ken the minister, Miss Sinclair," said Miss Rosie Clephane, bending over to my sister, when the blessing was said; "did he no do grand? That's our student lad I was telling you about—for the Presbytery only licensed him last week."

I looked at Lexie, and Lexie looked at me—never one of us said a word; but at last Lexie gave a bit short laugh, and rose up and went right away; I saw she thought shame.

Chapter XIII.

The minister came after us immediately from the church, Sabbath-day as it was.

"Annie Orme," said my sister, "your aunt Rechie and me are two old fools. I make no hesitation in saying that—but I am not a dour person—nobody can blame me with such a spirit; so if your aunt Rechie does not object, Annie, we'll ask this young man to stay to his dinner."

"Me, Lexie!" said I.

As if they did not both know that I would never oppose! So we put the minister opposite Annie at the table, and I took the head, and Lexie took the foot, and thus we had our Sabbath-day's dinner in Edinburgh. If any body had told me, three hours before, that Robbie would dine with us that day, I should have laughed it to scorn; yet, here he was, and no one in the room more taken with him than Lexie Sinclair, her very self.

So he told us all his story. It was true his father was a very poor man, with a poor small moorland-farm in the south country, no better than an East Lothian hind; but Lexie never seemed to heed that, though Mr. Robert told us plain. The poor lad said, too, that he lived for his first session on little more than five pounds; that his second he got some teaching; and that ever since he had been keeping himself in the hardest way, though principally by

teaching, till the last summer, when his father was in want himself, owing to an ailment among his cattle, and he was driven to great straits, and had to hire with Mr. Lait, of Butterbraes.

"A little vulgar pride stood in my way, no doubt," said Mr. Robert, with a smile, "but it was necessity, and I did it. There is no time of my life I shall regret less, Miss Lexie; for when I drove the Butterbraes cart, I had liberty sometimes to walk by the Esk water—and you will let me carry, not the remembrance only, but the companion of these walks with me all my life—will you, Miss Lexie?"

And Lexie said afterwards to me, "how could I, if I had been ever so inclined, have said 'No,' to a minister?"

So he is to get our Annie; and I am sure I am very glad and very well pleased, and proud of him, for a fine looking young man, not to say a minister. There is already some chance of him getting a kirk very soon, and whenever he is placed they are to be married; but though I am very glad of so suitable a man for Annie, and that she will not need to sew all her life, like us, but will be well taken care of and provided for, and have a higher place in this world than the like of us—

Still—but I would have been disappointed if she had not been married—still I am very loth to let her go away; and I think, may-be, the best plan of all would have been to let well alone, and keep her beside us, and have her aye Annie Orme.

It is too late for that now, for she is sitting at the window with Lexie making her wedding gown, which my sister and me bought out of Annie's knowledge, in Edinburgh, last Monday. And Lexie herself can almost come the length of laughing now about the license, and is as proud of the young man as can be. And only yesterday, when we went up to Windlestrae to see Mrs. Braird, who, poor woman, is anything but pleased with Phemie Mouter for a daughter-in-law, I smiled within myself at the change in Lexie—for whereas, a short time ago, she would have been overcome with shame at the very mention of Robert Scott as a match for Annie Orme; now she began of her own accord to tell Windlestrae and his wife the whole story, and all about "the grand sermon (I am sure she never heard a word of it any more than myself) which Mr. Robert preached in Edinburgh to Rechie, and Annie Orme, and me!"

BIRDS IN CAPTIVITY.*

THE BULFINCH.

(Loxia Pyrrhula.)

"His head of glossy jet I spy,
His downy breast of softest red."

I DIVIDE this subject into two parts—the educated and the untaught bird. The imperative necessity for adhering to the treatment pursued by the German instructors of these docile creatures would alarm an amateur, satisfied to have a bulfinch in its natural and uneducated state. I am fully convinced that, were our artizans to give the same meed of care as the patient professor of "Cher-Hessen," "Fulda," and the "Vogelsburg," our native birds would equal, if not rival, those of the "Faderland," our melodies being more simple and familiar; the natural notes are pleasing only as being illustrative of a cheerful, loving temperament—their huskiness conveying an idea of an effort to do better.

Naturalists have a variety of opinions as to the migration of these birds: I am inclined to believe that if, with us, it is a permanent resident, it, nevertheless, is more gregarious than is comprehended by a small family party, and that they change their quarters. It is only in the south that the bulfinch is pronounced to be a bird of passage, and I have reason to believe that it is a mere supposition, the result of finding these birds in every European state and abounding in Russia and Sweden. This confirms my opinion, that the delicacy of the German birds is the effect of man's treatment. I doubt that the "black bulfinch" is aught but a victim to bad feeding; the "white bulfinch" I should not pronounce to be so problematical, if the specimens said to be in the "Leverian Museum" had been *bred in the house*, as these birds pair with canaries; and the bird called "the London mule" (the produce of goldfinch and canary) is nearly white; besides, I have seen a bird *called* "the *white* blackbird"—(the term rather paradoxical!) The food for bulfinches caught in a wild state *(id. est.* the dunces) should be the same as I have laid down for the first and second class feeders, also apple blossom fruit: insects they seek when on the

* Continued from page 99.