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LIFE & WORK

A Parish Magazine

WITH

GAELIC SUPPLEMENT

CONTENTS.

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WALLYFORD.

By Mrs. OLIPHANT.

THE old house of Wallyford stands in the midst of the fields, in the rich and peaceful stretch of country which lies between Edinburgh and the sea. It stands no longer, let me add, but has been pulled down, and another house, possibly more convenient, and commodious, and healthy, but not so homely and attaching, built in its stead. Old houses come to be like growths of the kindly soil, dear as the hills are dear, and the singing burns by which we have played in our childhood, and the old trees—notwithstanding that the new ones may be better in some respects, they are not so dear. This house was neither large nor rich, nor even beautiful. It was a homely square house, with a rounded half-turret, in which was the stair; this made the most picturesque feature in the place. The staircase had a long window on the landing, and the door opened at its foot on the ground-floor. This window was the mount of vision of the house. It overlooked the approach, and the little shrubbery, and a bit of the road which led to the village, and through the village to all the great highways, to Edinburgh and to the world. Within, the rooms were low-roofed and homely—a dining-room, large and low, next to the kitchen, which was paved with red brick, with a hearth as white as snow; and upstairs a drawing-room, with five small twinkling windows, opening, as it seemed, at the first glance, in all the corners of the room, and making it a kind of lantern of cool greenish light, looking out at one side upon the great slopes of Arthur's Seat. The hill was six or seven miles off, but it was so great, heaving its mighty shoulder up against the sky, and covering itself with all the purple and gold of evening, and all the rose tints of the earlier day, with the distance ever blue and dreamy in its hollows, that it looked much nearer than it was. This drawing-room was such a room as no one would ever make now; but there never was a place that looked more entirely a home. The walls were thicker, and I suppose the windows fitted better than our badly made windows do—at least I know that a thin brick house in England, though it is farther south, and has more of the sunshine, is never so warm as was that many-windowed room. There was a west window, by which the last sunshine of the day got in; and there was a south-east window, which caught the sun by noon-day, so that all the light that was going got into this pleasant place. There was an old Turkey carpet on the floor, worn bare in various places; and old-fashioned chairs, such as Isabel Cameron, the daughter of the house, was slightly ashamed of, though, the fashion having changed, they would be valuable now. She would have liked to bring in the upholsterer and have everything modernised—being only twenty, and not much more wise than girls of twenty usually are; but fortunately (so far as this went) the Camerons were not very rich, and the mother of the house was of opinion that old furniture was suitable to old people.

Isabel was the child of their old age, and their consolation and support. She had been born when her mother was about forty, the last of a flock. It was sweet to the old people to have anything so young belonging to them. There was a kind of renewal to them in her freshness. She would read to them in the evenings, and sometimes Captain Cameron and his wife would scarcely hear what she said in their tender admiration of herself. "Our Isabel" was the name she went by; without that tender pronoun they scarcely ever thought of her. Captain Cameron had travelled about the world in all sorts of places. He was not a captain at all, indeed, but only a naval lieutenant, poor enough on his half-pay; but all his friends and neighbours had given him brevet rank for years. He was not a distinguished person though he had been in a great part of all that has been hard and dangerous in naval warfare during his time. He had been under "Charley Napier," as he called him, wherever that great sailor was; and he had done a great deal of obscure and dangerous work besides on the Gold Coast against the slavers, and wherever there was trouble and risk, and not much chance of distinction. He had a good-service pension, but that was all the notice the country had taken of this veteran. However, he did not mind; his medals were reward enough, and this quiet haven and rest he had attained to now. His wife had been a minister's daughter, which gave great decorum and regularity to the house. A salt-water man like old Captain Cameron wants regulation in this way; he would not, perhaps, have been so regular at church had it not been for his wife; but he was a very simple-minded Christian all the same, holding very fast to the plain interpretation of the Scriptures, and trusting God as a man has to do who has lived through storm and fight for nearly seventy years, holding his life in his hands. The faith that sustains a man in such continual encounters with danger and wounds and disease and death has to be a simple one. When he begins to make difficulties, and ask explanations of every wonder of Providence, the heart goes out of him. And God has nowhere undertaken to supply explanations. He has told us that all this is to be left for the end. Old Captain Cameron would hear none of those questionings which hearts in trouble so often make. "We'll know later on," he said, bowing his fine white head; and there were so many things in his own experience that wanted explaining, that nobody could have a better right. Mrs. Cameron was thought to be more pious by many people. She was very zealous in her attendance upon all "the ordinances," as she said; but sometimes her faith would fail her when the old sailor stood fast.

Those two had a large family, but there were only four left—two sons, both afloat on the world, a daughter married in India, and Isabel. "The boys" were men of eight-and-twenty and thirty. Mrs. Ramsay, the married daughter, was still older. She was as old as her mother in every habit and sentiment, and thought she—with the superior lights of a new generation—knew a great deal better than her mother. I am afraid the sons held something of the same opinion. It is difficult for full-grown people, in full encounter with the world, not to feel that they must know better, not only than the young, who have no experience, but than the old, whose experience is past. This is a feeling which we all are tempted to entertain when it is our turn to do the fighting, and the others are only looking on. One of the sons, Charles, was in London; another, John, in Edinburgh. Among those who were dead there had been misfortunes which had wrung the hearts of the parents more bitterly than death. There is nothing in which the lots of families are more unequal than this. Some will "do well," as people say, any number of them, jogging along the path of life without serious irregularity, without loss, or shame, or great trouble; whereas some will suffer all manner of loss and misery, backsliding and downfall, and ruin. The Camerons had been, as all their neighbours allowed, "sorely tried." One of their sons—a fine young man, with every gift of nature in his favour—had "gone astray" altogether. He had enlisted and been bought out, and then had disappeared; and where he was now they did not know—wandering somewhere in Californian wilds, living the rough life that American writers give us so many strange pictures of—or perhaps dead in the Australian bush, no one could tell. One had died in India at the moment of his life when all was most promising and fair. A third had been a clerk in a merchant's office in Glasgow, and had, like his brother, fallen into bad ways, and come home only to die. The two sons who remained to them now were "doing well," so far as anybody knew; but there had been a whisper about John—a glance exchanged between two people now and then, or shake of the head—which augured further woe. The old people had borne it all patiently, almost proudly,

to outward seeming. They had accepted no condolence, they had betrayed no secrets. No one had ever known from them what kind of life Willie had led, or that they knew nothing of him now. They gave evasive answers on this subject, though on all others they were rigid in their truthfulness. He wrote seldom, they said; he was a very bad correspondent. Mrs. Cameron said this with a smile, looking every questioner in the face to disarm all misgivings. Some one says that there are sins of this sort which the recording angel blots with a tear as he writes them. To see her smile and make her little speech about Willie's letters was enough to break one's heart. I have seen the same kind of smile many a time, and no doubt so has the reader too.

But Isabel was all sweetness and fragrance, like a flower growing between them, filling the house with perfume and pleasure. They were sitting in the pretty old drawing-room one dim evening in summer, when the days are so long in Scotland. It was nearly nine o'clock, but there were no candles lighted, and she was reading aloud. The light by which she was reading is not a light that is ever afforded to southern lands, though we know it so well in the north country. It was neither night nor day. The skies were silvery, fading out of the sunset glory, yet with still a great deal of yellow mingled in the blue, making soft breaks of far-away greenness, but too faint and fine in tone to be called green. Mrs. Cameron sat with her knitting at the further window, which, though it did not command the door, was near enough to make every summons audible, and every sound of an approaching step. She was knitting and listening to what Isabel read, and there was the shadow of a smile that was past, or rather the light of a smile to come, upon her face; but underneath her smile and her attention to her work and to the reading, there was a very different strain of listening, for a footstep which did not come. This was why she chose that place of all others.

She sat there on Saturday nights when John was coming out from Edinburgh. This was before the days of railways, and John generally walked, which seemed the most natural way. It would not seem so natural now when there is a railway and many omnibuses; but it was a thing that all vigorous and youthful people did then. Old Captain Cameron sat at the other end of the room, with his face turned to the west window, which was in a deep recess at one side of the fireplace. In summer his arm-chair turned its back ungratefully upon the empty fireplace, which in winter he was too glad to turn to. His face was turned to his daughter, who sat in the west window against the light, and made a very pretty picture with her fair soft hair curling about her neck. Part of it was knotted at the back of her head in a soft coil, and the rest shed behind her ear and curling on her throat. That would be very old-fashioned nowadays; but it was thought very pretty then. She was reading in a soft voice, very melodious to the ears of the old people. It was only the newspaper. There was not very much of importance in it. This was in the long lull that followed the great Peninsular wars, the thirty years' peace when people were beginning to think that war would never be known upon earth again. They were mistaken, as we all know; but they were able to think so then; and there were no telegrams about battles — nor, indeed, about anything else — for the telegraph, as yet, was not in existence. It made a great deal of difference in life—perhaps for the worse in many things, but in one or two for the better. People were more patient and more tranquil when they could not get messages of life or death at any moment. Captain Cameron had his face turned towards his daughter; but nevertheless he was conscious of the aspect of his wife, and knew in a moment, by a side-glance at the outline of her against her window, what she was thinking of, and that as yet there was no step audible coming up the road. She was his telegraph. He knew when there was anything like a footstep in the distance by a momentary pause of her knitting-needles. When that happened, he too held his breath; but when he saw them go on again, composed himself once more to pay attention to the reading, with a little sigh.

"There is nothing to read," said Isabel, suddenly, having read it all through. "Only something about the Town Council at Musselburgh, and the herring fishing. You don't care about the herring fishing, papa?"

"I—not care about the herring fishing, when it is the life of a whole town! You must think little of my heart, Isabel."

"Well, I think I have a heart," said the girl. "Perhaps not a very great one like yours, papa; but I don't care about the herrings. They make such a smell—the whole place is fishy for weeks after. And all the salting, and curing, and barrelling is so odious. I like them well enough, bonnie shining things, all lying like a mass of slippery silver in the boat."

"And slippery silver is what they bring in to the fishers' houses, Isabel. A feasting, and a waste, and little more. They might as well never be brought out of the sea for all the good they do—except to the curers that are rich enough already."

"You are too hard upon the poor folk," said the old Captain. "Never be hard upon poor folk. They have things to bear we could not put up with, and they are often kind to each other when we would be harsh. Let us hear what is to be said about the herrings, Isabel."

"I think it is time for prayers, papa."

Captain Cameron looked at his wife—that is, he did not look at her, he referred to her as he might have referred to his look-out-man at sea. She said, with something which she would not have allowed to be a sigh, which was only a long breath, "It is so long light to-night, nobody would think it was so late; five minutes more or less makes little difference."

"You mean, mamma," said Isabel, with a laugh; "I know what you mean—that you want to wait for John. He is late; he is always late now. Do they keep the office open longer than they used to do on Saturday nights?"

To this neither father nor mother made any reply. There was a little faint sound outside; her needles stopped for a second, then went on again; then she put her knitting softly down on the little table. "I will go and look at the clock," she said.

"Mamma thinks we don't see through her," said Isabel. "As if I did not know where she is going. Don't you know where she is going? To the staircase window to look out for John. When I am late, I wonder if she is anxious about me?"

"If you are in any danger, my dear."

"Danger! but John is in no danger," Isabel said.

Her father made no reply, and in the silence her mother's soft steps were audible going down a few steps of the stair to the level of the window. She had gone to look first at the great old eight-day clock on the landing in scrupulous fulfilment of her word. And now she was standing, they both felt, looking out. A sudden flood of new thought had poured through Isabel's mind. Danger! what danger could be in John's way? There were no highwaymen now as she had read about—no bravoes or assassins such as those that lurk still in old-fashioned books—no pitfalls or snares in the honest, simple road from Edinburgh. What was there to be alarmed about? Isabel held her breath in the sudden panic that seized her. Danger! Isabel knew nothing. She had been left out in the calculations of the father and mother; they had spared her youth; but revelation was coming upon her now.

Mrs. Cameron stood on the stair leaning against the sill of the long window looking out. A soft dusk wrapped everything—trees and hedges and the flowers, out of which most of their colour had gone; but the gate of the garden was visible, and the brown line of the road beyond—that road which went into the world with all its dangers.

She stood and gazed out, but no figure appeared breaking the line of path. How is it that no influence can go out from a longing and anxious heart full of love, to bring back a wanderer? The old mother stood at the window, the old father sat holding his breath, listening, longing; but though they longed and listened, and watched and prayed, nobody came. And Isabel looked round her wistfully, not knowing the meaning of it. She had seen all this little pantomime gone through before, but it had never occurred to her before to ask what it meant. Danger! but where was there danger in an innocent country road that could come to John?

Steps interrupted the watch, but not the steps for which they were listening. It was a sound of a continuous tramp from the kitchen, coming upstairs, heavy feet traversing the passages. When it began, Mrs. Cameron turned softly and came back, up the few steps of the stair into the drawing-room. "Get out the books, Isabel," she said with a sigh; and the old Captain sighed too, sympathetic. Then the door, which was ajar, was pushed open, and two people came in.

These were Simon and Marget, the two servants of the house. They had married twenty years before "for company," and to establish matters upon a genial footing in the kitchen. He was the gardener, the outdoor man, though not above doing a little in the house when occasion served. She was everything indoors. Now and then a girl would be taken from the village to help her, but this was more for the advantage of the girl than Marget, who declared that "they were aye getting in the way." Nowadays there would have been three or four servants to do Marget's work; but then the house was Marget's house as much as it was Mrs. Cameron's, which, no doubt, tells for something. The idea of sending her away would have dismayed the house. And Marget would have been the most surprised of any. "Term! what do I ken about your terms?" she cried when some injudicious person had suggested that she was "maybe making a change at the term." "What would I make a change for? I ken when I'm weel aff," was what Marget said. Simon and she dwelt in their kitchen as the others dwelt in the parlour; they spoke of "oor house" and "oor bairns" (having none of their own), loving and finding fault as the parents did. Their "wage" was very modest, their fare very simple, but their devotion was perfect. We would give their weight in gold if we could get such servants now; they linger, it may be supposed, in out-of-the-way corners, old-fashioned, faithful and true. They marched upstairs now, like a regiment, Margaret first, a large comely woman of forty-five, while her husband, a tall and gaunt personage with a long face and longer limbs, followed with heavy tread. "I thought you had forgotten the hour," she said, as she came in with her Bible in her hand, and sat down against the wall. "If we should happen to forget, you always mind, Marget," said her mistress, with perhaps a tone of impatience in her voice.

"Oh ay, mem," said Marget, "I aye mind; when you have a clock that keeps time like the sun himsel', you've nae excuse for being late." "I bade her bide for Mr. John, but she wadna be bidden by me," said Simon, seating himself by her side. "Mr. John will come a' the sooner," said Marget with decision, "if he's no watched and waited for like the king himself." "And that is true," said the old Captain turning round and opening the big Bible. Then he said with a little quaver in his voice, "We'll dispense with the psalm to-night." They all knew very well why this was; and Marget, who was the critic of the establishment, did not approve of it. She cleared her throat so decidedly that her protest was as clear as if spoken in words. The Captain, like his wife, was perhaps a little impatient of opposition in the suppressed excitement of his heart.

"What have you to say against that?" he asked abruptly. "This is not a moment for discussion; but you may as well say it out."

"Captain, I'm no' meaning ony debate. Is the Almighty to want His psalm every Saturday at e'en because there's ane that's no' here?"

"The Almighty does not need our psalm," said the old Captain. "We are not such grand singers, Margaret, that He should miss you and me."

"It's no' grand singers He's thinking of, Captain, but them that mak' melody in their hearts," said the woman, holding her own.

"That is like a poem I was reading," said Isabel, "of a poor shoemaker laddie in his stall, that sang and sang like the lark, always the earliest at heaven's gates; and they took him and made him a — great man," said the girl, with a little hesitation. (In the poem he was made a Bishop and Pope, and Isabel knew these titles were not pleasant in the ears of her audience.) "And though he was always very good, God missed the little voice in the early early mornings. It could not be for the sake of the music, for you would wonder He could hear it among all the angels; but He missed the little voice."

The Captain made no reply. If he was convinced he gave no sign, but opened his Bible and began to read. He had a lighted candle placed on the small table beside him, which threw a warm illumination upon his face, lighting up his white hair and large pallid countenance, and contrasting strangely with the silvery failing light behind, which was still light enough for all the rest. Mrs. Cameron had taken her seat again by the east window. She tried to fix all her attention upon the chapter which was being read; but now and then her heart would stir in her bosom at some imaginary sound. Then they knelt down, and the old father lifted up his voice and prayed. The prayer he used had got to be a familiar form enough to all their ears. They knew the very variations which he employed on these petitions, which must be always the same; but now and then the Captain would break forth out of all the ordinary phrases, into that "earnest and familiar talking with God" which was John Knox's definition of prayer —not always, perhaps not even often, but now and then. If I tell you what this prayer was, you will not think it is a want of reverence to put it in this story; for it was a very real and true prayer.

"Lord," said the old man, lifting up his countenance towards the fading lovely skies, but seeing nothing, absorbed in his prayer, "Thou hast accepted to Thyself one great blessedness, that we would be fain, fain to share. Thou, who art the great Father, who hast made us parents and given us children like to Thyself, give us likewise to share that joy which is the perfection of all joys. As Thou art ever well pleased in Thy Son, O Father, so make us to be well pleased in ours. Give us but this of all Thy gifts. We have asked for daily bread, and shelter, and peace; but if it pleases Thee to take all these things from us and give us this, Amen, O Lord, so be it. Thou, who art ever well pleased in Thy Son, make us to see in ours His image, who is the image of the Father. Lord, Thou art not a man, to make bargains, to give one thing and withhold another. Thou dost not grudge the lesser for having given the greater. Give us this, O Lord, to share Thy satisfaction in Thy Holy Child, and be well pleased with the sons of our bowels, the children of our hearts."

The old servants were like a second father and mother praying this prayer, and only the young Isabel joined in it with a wonder in her young heart. She was awed, but she did not answer. "Thy Son, in whom Thou art ever well pleased." She did not understand as the older hearers did the fulness of blessedness in these words—God's blessedness which His servants were "fain, fain to share." But one thing else she understood very well, and her heart jumped while she knelt,—a quick step on the road outside, the sound of a latch lifted, a voice that said, "Where are you, mother?" at the foot of the stair.

When they rose from their knees John came in, a

little dusty, but smiling. He was a well-grown young man, fair, like his sister, but with a slightly excited air, and pale as a young fellow should not have been after a wholesome six-miles' walk. "Late again," he said, with a jaunty air; "I am ever so sorry, mother," and then he rattled off a long line of excuses, of which some contradicted the others. But there was no blame addressed to him except from Margaret, who, as I have said, was the critic of the establishment.

"Your supper is a' ready and on the table," she said, as she left the room; "come, and I'll brush the dust off ye, Mr. John. I wuss ye hadna so many excuses," she said, as he followed her downstairs. "You might surely manage no' to keep your mother waiting. Pouff! laddie, what a dust! You might try and keep your hours ae night in the week, no' to give your mother a sore heart."

"Why should she have a sore heart?" he said, with a laugh. "I am surely old enough to take care of myself."

"Are you, my man? Oh, the Lord send we were ony of us old enough to take care of oursel's! But that's an ill wish. I'll wish you better, Mr. John—Him to take care of you—'He shall give His angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee in a' thy ways——' What would your friends think if they saw a great white angel ganging by you, through all thae ill places?"

"They would be rather frightened, I don't doubt," he said, with a laugh; "but what right have you to suppose that I am in ill places? you are a suspicious auld wife, and know nothing of the world."

"What joke are you having with Marget?" said his mother, following him downstairs. She put her hand fondly upon his shoulder. It still trembled a little with the suspense, though it was over. But she did not stop for an answer. "Come in, come in to your supper, my bonny man; you must be tired with your long walk."

The supper table looked very bright. Charley, in London, had sent a new kind of lamp just invented, which everybody thought was beautiful, as a present to his mother, and Isabel had made the table gay with roses; a great, old china punch-bowl of the old blue and red porcelain, which nobody thought much of, but everybody possessed, full of roses, red and white, stood just within the light of the lamp. The four people round the table were all very happy, the elder ones forgetting; or putting behind them for the moment, the spasm of anxiety which evidently, as they had assured each other, was quite gratuitous on their part. How happy they were to think they had been all wrong! When the cheerful meal was over the brother and sister strolled out into the garden. "I want one of my mother's white roses, John said, "to put in my coat," and the two strayed out into the soft and fragrant dusk arm in arm. Old Captain Cameron came round the table, not very steady in his walk, for he was rheumatic with age and wounds. "You see it was nothing," he said, putting his hand upon his wife's shoulder. "Can you not trust God with the lad, though he is so dear?"

"I can trust God, William; but there are times—there are times—when He will not hear."

"What is past I cannot explain," said her husband; "we will know about that later on. But, for the present, my dear, I'll have no doubting. The Lord *will* hear. He is bound, doubly bound to you and me, all the more that He did not hear us before."

While this was being said indoors the two outside were chatting over the great white rose bush, which was called in the family "my mother's white rose." It was almost a tree, thick, and tall, and strong, throwing up showers of shadowy white globes against the rounded, projecting tower of the stair. "It will soon be up to the roof," Isabel said; "you can gather the roses out of the window. They come all round my mother's head when she stands there and looks out for you."

"One would think to hear you, Bell, that she was always looking out for me."

"Every Saturday night," said Isabel, "and every time she passes up or down, she stops to give a look. I don't know if it is for you. I wish you would tell me one thing; are you in any danger, John?"

"Danger!" he cried, laughing, "of pricking my fingers with my mother's roses. Nothing else, that I know."

"But they are thinking of something else," Isabel said.

He grew red, though she could not see in the darkness. "I'll tell you what," he said; "they are enough to drive a fellow out of his senses. Always suspicious! Why shouldn't I be late if I have occasion? Why shouldn't I stay away altogether when I have something better to do?" Then, instead of putting the white rose in his buttonhole, he held it in his hand a moment, then pitched it far away among the darkling trees.

To be continued.

SCOTTISH LADS.

WHEN this Magazine was begun, one main object was to furnish reading for the kitchens and bothies of Scotland, and to promote the moral improvement of the servants in town and country. Mr. R. M. Ballantyne's powerful tale was expressly written, at our request, to interest Scottish lads. The contributions of our valued contributor, "The Old Farm Servant," have also, we are well assured by those whom we can trust, done much good. We wish that in all cases they had reached the hands of those for whom they were written. They may now be had in their collected form in our Volume for 1879. But our object is not so much to suggest that, as to speak of something else. One effort leads to another, and we believe that the time has come for an attempt—long thought of—to found a "Scottish Lads' Friendly Society," somewhat corresponding in its rules of membership to the "Glasgow Foundry Boys' Religious Society," but embracing the whole of Scotland in its scope, and connected with the Church of Scotland. We believe that many ministers, to whom (as the "Christian Life and Work Reports" have often shown) the best way to reach and influence farm-lads is an unsolved problem, will be right glad to enter heartily into the attempt to organise a Society of such lads. It is a serious undertaking which is thus briefly sketched. We invite suggestions and offers of help, in service or funds, to be headed "Scottish Lads' Friendly Society," and addressed to the Secretary of Committee on Christian Life and Work, 22 Queen Street, Edinburgh. Some particulars of a proposed plan (for which suggestions are invited) will be published in next number if, meanwhile, there be a hearty response to the general purpose. If we meet with the success we expect, we hope to have a programme ready for the consideration of the General Assembly in May.

SUPPLEMENTS.

IN addition to Parish Supplements there are now several of a more general kind. There are several Presbytery Supplements, and we heartily wish there were more, as such Supplements meet the circumstances of many rural parishes which have not sufficient parochial matter to require a Supplement every month for each one. We may venture, without being invidious, to make special mention of the Orkney Supplement. There is also a Gaelic Supplement. There comes to us across the seas, while we write, an admirable "Ceylon Supplement." It is proposed to have a Supplement for circulation among soldiers and sailors, and volunteer and militia regiments. Several officers connected with Scotland have urged this upon us, and if we can find an editor, and have promise of contributors and of circulation which will warrant the attempt, we shall forthwith set about a four-page Supplement under the title of "H.M. Service Supplement."

And as you are one in the sight of God, your duties to each other are summed up in the work of mutual helpfulness. In living for each other, the one thing you should keep in view is your individual and common good. You must unite in the overcoming of each other's sins and in the culture of each other's virtues. This is the surest way to domestic happiness. When goodness is kept in view as the end of your domestic life, you are adopting God's ordained plan for the promotion of domestic peace and comfort. Your natural love has not its end in the pure pleasures that spring from it, but in the righteousness and holiness of your respective characters. The perfecting of your character according to the will and method of God is in a very important sense the very end of your union. The husband who shows his love in self-sacrifice for his wife's good is standing to her as Christ stands to the Church, and the wife who uses her love in order to make her husband a good man is teaching love its highest ministry. And no fickleness of disposition, or trial of temper, can annul the duty of mutual helpfulness. Melancthon, who had a suffering, delicate wife, with an unhealthy fancy as to her bodily weakness, could yet call marriage "a kind of philosophy that required duties the most honourable and the most worthy of a noble man." And this mutual helpfulness must not be confined to seasons of profitable talk and set times of prayerful fellowship. These will not be neglected by you if you are in God's ordained attitude to each other, and they will occur as natural events in your domestic life. But your mutual good must be kept in view in the whole round of the daily task allotted to each, and it ought to be the end to which the whole domestic purpose tends.

You may think that this is an ideal picture, with a very far-off reference to the actual condition of modern domestic life. This may be true. But it is good for us to see ourselves in the mirror of an ideal. When God presents us with an ideal, we may be sure that it is within our power to approach indefinitely near to it. It has been well said that every call of God is accompanied by the offer of the grace that enables us to obey it. The ideal home was lost in Eden through the fall, but it may be regained by you through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. The jarring notes of life are all blended in a Psalm at Calvary. Christ is the power of a new individuality, and the union of a renewed man and woman in the marriage covenant is the Christian ideal of home. And this might be the character of home in every palace and in every cottage in Scotland.

THE BUILDERS OF SEVILLE CATHEDRAL.—They believe that God has condescended to dwell among men in the host upon His altar; and we have seen the sort of tabernacle they have reared for His dwelling-place. We believe that the dwelling-place He loves best is a human heart: have we been at equal pains to make these hearts of ours a home worthy Him? Which of us has best shown his sincerity?—*St. Cuthbert's Parish Magazine.*

WALLYFORD.

By Mrs. OLIPHANT.

CHAPTER II.

JOHN CAMERON opened his eyes next morning upon the familiar walls of the room which had been his since he was a boy, and saw the sunshine coming in through the small panes of the windows, and heard the birds singing outside, with what was for the moment a sense of peace and relief. Though his parents were so anxious about him, his heart was yet within reach of all the old gentle influences of home. And he had been living a distracting life during the week; getting up every morning with the intention of doing his work, and avoiding all idleness and dissipation, but generally finding himself at night in the same position as before, with a knowledge that much of his day had been wasted, and some part of it more than wasted; that he was getting against him a slow-growing, reluctant disapproval on the part of his employers; that there were many things in his life which demanded concealment, and which would shame him if brought to the light of day—painful thoughts, which he pushed aside and would not face. If he had faced them and fairly asked himself how far these things were consistent with the life which he thought he wished to lead—the life of an honest man and a Christian—John knew well enough that it would be impossible to satisfy himself any more than he could have satisfied his father or his master. But he did not want to be brought face to face with his own careless life; he preferred much to be let alone, to stumble on from day to day, always meaning to do better to-morrow; and to think that his father and mother were old-fashioned and did not understand the world; and that there was a general prejudice against him among his employers and all the people with whom he had to do. But when he woke in the perfect peace of his little room at Wallyford, with its little window full of sunshine, and the birds singing outside, a sense of safety and repose got into his breast. For to-day, at least, there would be no reason why he should not do his duty. No one could rush into his room with a shout of, "Come along, old fellow!" to remind him of some engagement he had made overnight, some expedition or entertainment which "just this once" he must keep to, whatever the risk at the office might be. There would be no need for any struggle; perhaps it might be dull later, he said to himself; but in the meantime it was pleasant. The birds were "singing their heads off" in the trees, making the very air ring with a tumult of music; perhaps it was because all was so quiet here. And the air seemed to be made of sunshine—not blazing and scorching as it is farther south, but penetrating in its delicious warmth, going to the very heart. The white roses flung themselves up into it with an energy of happiness which made John smile at them instinctively, as if he had still been a child. Everything was happy about him; his heart, which had been beaten hither and thither by various emotions, not consistent with happiness—excitement, haste, uneasy compunctions and shame, seemed to sink down softly in his breast to quiet beating, to a kind of fictitious peacefulness. It was not a peace which would outlast the day, but perhaps he did not wish it to outlast the day. Here at home the quiet was a part of the pleasure; away from home, most likely, it would be dull; but, for this one Sabbath day, nothing could be more sweet. He felt good as he dressed himself in his best and went downstairs, and gathered a half-opened bud from his mother's tree to put in his coat. How sweet everything was! and he was young, with bloom still upon his cheek, and nothing so far wrong in his past but that it might be made right again. When they all set out to church in a pretty procession, the brother and sister first, the old people after, walking more slowly, for Captain Cameron was a little lame, what pleasure was in the hearts of the father and

mother! Isabel in her white dress, fresh and fair as a flower; and their boy in all the glory of his young manhood, with the white rose in his buttonhole. Was not that an emblem of purity and innocence and hope? Marget and Simon turned the big key in the kitchen door, and came on two minutes after. The key was laid down at the root of "the mistress's rose bush," where all the familiars of the house could find it. But who was likely to come that way this Sabbath morning? "Ye might leave it in the door," said Simon; "it's ower fine a day for ony mischief." "Eh man," said Marget, more prudent, "ye think thae vagrant creatures are like your flowers, and want naething but a bright sky to mak' them guid." "It doesna fill their emptiness," said Simon, "but it makes the green turf as warm as your fireside." "And my guid broth!" said Marget, but what was the connection in her mind, I would not venture to say. Though she took this precaution against tramps, there was no wanderer ever went away from that kindly door without a bowl of broth or a "piece." That was the custom in the old days. The broth by the side of the fire bubbled and simmered slowly, coming to perfection at a modest distance from the heat, and Marget's black cat sat in a haze of dreamy comfort in sole enjoyment of the fireside. Ettrick, the collie, was taking a sober walk about the garden and grounds; he knew very well that it was Sunday, and his attendance undesired by his masters; but whether it was that he had measured a sun-dial for himself by the shadows of the trees, as persons less clever have done, or heard some faint echo on the road, inaudible to human ears, of the stir of the "kirk skailing," it is certain that he went off with a soft long run, his great tail in the air, and his head down, just in time to meet his people as they came home. What trifling things to talk about! But they all made up the impression of deep peace and gentle quiet in John Cameron's mind. This was the outside of the pleasant summer Sunday. And the early dinner, with Marget's excellent broth, and all the family talk, was pleasant too.

But when the summer afternoon came, John began to flag. The afternoon is the time that tries us all. It is then that we begin to feel the want of something to do, something to occupy our hands or our minds, and keep rest from becoming monotonous. For after all, rest is the most difficult of all things to manage—how to proportion it to our wants, how to keep it from becoming a burden and a danger. There are hundreds of people who can arrange their work quite satisfactorily, to twenty who can make their rest really a relief and consolation, as it is intended to be. And John had nothing to do; he did not want to read, nor would it have been taken well of him if, on his sole day at home, he had buried himself in a book. And he had asked about everybody, and heard all Charley's letters and the last news from Agnes, his married sister in India, who wrote home by every mail. What was to be done more? He could not tell them much about his life in Edinburgh, or he would not, and the conversation flagged. The afternoon was so bright and so long. Gradually John began to recollect that it was more convenient, on the whole, to go back to Edinburgh on Sunday evening than to wait for Monday. He thought of a great many hours of failing conversation still before him, and of the candles that would be lighted in the drawing-room late in the evening, and the dimness of the place, and the want of anything to do; whereas, on the other side, he could call before his imagination lighted rooms, all bright and crowded with acquaintances and cheerful voices, and companions whose talk perhaps was not worth half so much as the conversation in Wallyford, but who would be more congenial and more lively. When he left them on Sunday evening, instead of Monday, the comfort of the household was diminished all the week after. But he did not think of that; or if he had thought of it, perhaps John would have been angry and made all the more haste to go; for why should his freedom be limited? It was Isabel who suggested the walk to the Fisherstown, which was about a mile and a half off. John's former nurse lived there, having married a fisherman, and it made her very proud and happy to see John. "We will be back in time for tea," Isabel said. "And I think, mother——" said John; but then he paused. What he intended to say was that he must go back after tea, but something in her look stopped him. He did not say it. "What were you thinking, my man?" "Nothing," he said, half sullen. Why should they try to stop his freedom? Was he not able, quite able, to take care of himself?

However, when Isabel and he were out alone, things brightened a little. The roads were dusty; but in that district, within the reach of the salt sea, it is never too hot for walking, even in a summer afternoon. Isabel had gathered up her white dress over her arm to walk the more easily. She had the shady setting of a large parasol all about her bright face, and she was ready to listen to him with unbounded interest. John felt himself far more free here than indoors, and he began to speak to Isabel about many subjects which would have been inappropriate at Wallyford. He talked to her about "fellows" whom he knew, and about cigars, and wine, and horses, and even theatres, none of which things Isabel had much acquaintance with; but for a time it amused her to hear him discourse upon these strange subjects. She was quite willing to consider it wonderful that Simson's mare should have got over so much ground in so short a space of time—and clever that he had got his last box of cigars such a great bargain. She had heard the same sort of talk before, and it had been droll to her to remark how different the talk was of boys (as she irreverently called her brother) and girls: but yet the one not much more instructive than the other. Her smiles, her attention, drew John on.

"You should have seen us the other day," he said. "I went to the Races at Dalkeith, I and two other fellows—not much in the way of races, you know—a poor lot of horses. The drive was the fun. Do you know what a tandem is, Bell?"

She had to pause to think, but after a while remembered to have read of such a thing, "in a book about the English colleges," she said. "The students drive about in them."

"Students!" said John in disdain. "They are very swell things. One of the fellows blew a horn. We had the greatest fun. You should have seen the people run out to the doors to see us as we went past. And we went like the wind. They thought it was the old mail coach when they heard the horn; and then to see this bit of a thing flying, the leader with all his feet in the air, and a whirlwind of dust."

Isabel listened smiling; then she began to remember her mother's grave face on the Saturday night's watch, and to think of the "danger" of which her father had spoken. She did not understand it very well, but her mind seemed to awaken slowly to a vague uneasiness. At first it seemed to her rather a fine thing that her brother should drive about with a tandem; but perhaps after all—— "Do you often go to races?" she said.

"When I can. Don't be prejudiced, now, Bell. There is no harm in them. It is only my mother's old-fashioned notions. The governor himself goes."

"And does he like you to go, John?"

"Ah, that is quite a different thing! They like pleasure themselves—but when we are young, when we can really enjoy it, then we must be shut up at the desk all day while they take their fun. That is the thing that riles me."

Isabel did not know what to say, and John went on with his revelations. His tongue was loosed. He told her that he had won "quite a pot of money" upon Vortigern. "Nobody thought he would do anything, but I liked the looks of him from the first. I know a horse when I see him," John said, with that air of boyish vanity which makes strangers laugh. But Isabel had a

little temper, and it made her heart hot to see her brother look silly, which was how she characterised it within herself.

"Who is Vortigern? and what do you know about horses? O John, what are you talking about? You are not like yourself; you are like——" She stopped, for a very wounding comparison had risen to her lips.

"Who am I like? It is not much you know," said John, half offended, "about horses or anything else. I have learned a great many things since I have been on my own hook. A fellow is never half a fellow living down in a hole like this. But the moment they think you are enjoying yourself they are down upon you," he cried.

"Who do you mean by *they*, John? We are always very happy when we think you are enjoying yourself," Isabel said, with a little falter in her voice.

"Yes, going to tea-parties at Miss Martin's, or asked out to dinner where there are nothing but old fogeys, and everybody says, 'How is your excellent father?'"

"Well!" said Isabel, indignant; "you should be glad to have an excellent father. When they ask me that, I am so proud! I say, 'Quite well, thank you,' out loud: but in myself I could sing—How delightful that everybody knows how excellent he is; and how thankful, how thankful, I am that he is well!"

"I don't say," said John, somewhat abashed, "that I am not thankful too; but to talk to a fellow about his father and mother is not much fun." And then he went on with his confidences. Isabel listened, it must be acknowledged, with a mingled sense of admiration and surprise. Some of John's friends seemed very great people to the inexperienced girl. One had promised to invite him to the Highlands to shoot; and with another he had dined at the Club, which sounded very dignified to Isabel. "But it must all make you spend a great deal of money, John; and how are you to get on when you are so often away from the office?" she asked. John told her she was a little goose and knew nothing about it. "The chief thing," he said carelessly, "in life and in business, is to make friends that can push you on—I know what I am about." And he looked so wise that Isabel was disposed to—laugh if the truth must be told. It was not the kind of conversation which Mrs. Cameron expected to arise between them as she watched the two young figures disappearing under the green arch of the great ash-trees which stood beyond the gate of Wallyford. It would be hard to say what the mother expected Isabel to say to her brother—to warn him against dangers the girl knew nothing of—or give him good advice out of her own innocence and ignorance. But perhaps the perplexed and wondering look which came upon Isabel's face, as he spread out all his tale of youthful complacency and folly, did as much for John as he was capable of having done for him at that moment. It gave him a little shock to see the look of bewilderment on her face. That was because she was only a girl and silly—was it? or was there something else that repeated this expression in John's own heart? He would not have paid much attention to her advice, but he remembered the look in her eyes of alarm and wonder. What was there to be frightened about? He was half angry, but he remembered it all the same.

The Fisherstown was a long street of irregular cottages, half of them confronted by a second line of houses turning their backs to the beach, half of them facing the sea. The little harbour and pier were at the farther end, standing out white with bleached and sea-worn masonry against the blue breadth of the firth, and the bit of stony beach beyond. With the cluster of brown masts and cordage in the distance, and the red roofs of the cottages, the Fife hills for a background, and the sea almost as blue as the sky, there was a picturesque and homely beauty about the scene. But the place had always a flavour of fish, and if not positively dirty, was inhabited by people who took no particular care to show that they were clean, if they *were* clean. On a warm day, when the sun found out every scrap of decaying matter in the gutter, it was not pleasant to walk along this picturesque little street. How was it that the people did not smell it themselves? but perhaps the sharp salt fragrance of the waves rolling in almost to their very doors, took away a portion of the harm. John and Isabel had paid their visit to their old nurse and were turning back towards Wallyford, not sorry to escape from the general fishiness, when they came upon one of those scenes by the wayside which suggest an entire story. Seated on a bench by one of the cottage doors was a young man, leaning back against the rough wall which had once been washed with yellow, half asleep in the sun, his blue bonnet tilted over his eyes, his rough fisher's jersey and jacket showing no trace of the "redding up" appropriate to the Sunday. This was not a common sight in Fisherstown, where, if the men showed signs that Saturday night and its riots had preceded the Sabbath rest, they were generally either kept indoors by the care of their wives, or made presentable, as became the day. This young fellow, however, had no wife nor mother to look after him; he was a lodger in the house by which he sat half asleep in a fit of bravado, defying all that "the neebors" might say. John, who was a step in advance, made a pause before this figure, which stretched across the little pavement with slumbering feet. "I wish you would take your legs out of the way, my lad," he said; then added with surprise, "Is it Robbie Baird?"

"Wha's speerin' for Robbie Baird? ay, that's me," said the young fisher, half opening his sleepy eyes. There was a smile upon his handsome brown face, full of good-nature and indolent ease. "If ye've ony business wi' Robbie Baird ye'll hae to wait till the morn."

"Business! but you might get out of the way," said John; and then, though he was so far from blameless, this other young man with the white rose in his best coat felt himself at liberty to throw a stone at his contemporary. "You don't look much like Sunday, Rob, lying there in your working clothes. What has come over you to-day?"

"Come ower me the day! na, naething's come ower me the day; it might be last night; I'm no saying." Then, without moving, he gave a sleepy glance upwards from under his half-closed eyelids. "Is't you, Mr. John? then you're no such an innocent but you ken what's come ower me. A wee merry, a wee merry, Saturday at e'en, and a long lie on the Sabbath morning. I'm nae heepocrite, me," he added after a pause, with a low laugh; "I'm hevin' my fling, and sae I tell you. If I'm wild, as you say, I'm no a whited sepulchre wi' a rose in my breest." And here Rob laughed again with the foolishness of a man only half sobered, yet with the shrewdness of a natural observer. There were two women within the open door of the house to whom his sleepy drawl was half addressed. The elder one, who was the mistress of the house, came out to the doorstep as she spoke.

"Ye may mak' an exhibition o' yourself, Robbie Baird, if you please, and naebody can stop ye; but ye needna pit yourself in a gentleman's road that's gaun through the toun on his ain business, and meddlin' with naebody," she said.

"Eh, mistress, ye're aye preachin'," said Robbie; "it's John Cameron. I ken him as weel as I ken mysel'. He's no that strait-laced. Eh, Maister John? You and me, we've seen a thing or twa, that thae women never understand."

"Get up, you big fool," said John, furious, yet afraid of further revelations. "Do you see my sister can't get past you?—my sister—will you hold your tongue, you ass?" he said in a fierce whisper close to his ear.

Robbie stumbled up to his feet; his brown face grew red with sudden shame. He was a fine handsome young fellow, powerful and active, though half dazed with the effects of his debauch, and sleep, and sunshine, and self-disgust, though he veiled the last. He stood on the narrow path, his strong figure swaying to one side, before

he steadied himself with an effort. Then his hand stole to his bonnet. "I saw nae leddy," he said abashed. Isabel stood by, in her fresh white dress, shrinking back a little, her wondering, troubled face set against the large shadowy frame of her parasol. Tears stood in her soft eyes. She looked from Rob to her brother, both of whom drew back a little under her clear and simple gaze. While they stood thus, the other woman came out from the door. She was a pretty country girl, in her Sunday dress, evidently arranged with all her simple skill, a figure like the day, bright and pleasant, but her eyes were red with crying, and her cheeks flushed. When he caught sight of her, Rob's face, which had grown grave, changed; he burst forth again into a laugh.

"Here they are!" he said, "here they are; there's your sister and my lass, twa bonny creatures, I'll uphaud that, whae'er says the contrary. And, Maister John," said the young fellow with another laugh, "here's you and me—and we're a bonnie pair!"

"Come along, Isabel," said John; "the fellow's drunk, or near it." He was red with rage and shame.

"I'm no a whited sepulchre wi' a rose in my buttonhole," cried the fisherman with his mocking laugh.

"Gang ben the hoose, gang ben the hoose; O Rob, Rob, ae quarrel's plenty," cried the girl, who stood behind; "now a's ended atween you and me—but you needna jeer and pick a quarrel with the gentleman. Miss Eesabell, speak a word to your brother; he doesna ken what he's saying; and a's done between him and me," she repeated with a fresh outburst of tears.

Rob stood, the centre of the group for a moment, undecided whether to carry on his assault upon John, or to hide in some better way the tumult in his own breast. But as for John, he reflected that least said was soonest mended. He caught his sister by the arm, and led her away, smothering his wrath, not even turning back to reply to the laugh of triumph with which Rob sank again upon his bench, defying all his surroundings. Jeanie Young, the fisherman's "lass," followed Isabel too, pulling her sleeve and whispering anxiously through her tears—

"O Miss Eesabell! you're no to think waur of him than he deserves; he's broken my heart—but he's no that ill, no as ill as he says; he wouldna harm a dog—he's naebody's enemy but his ain."

"And yet, Jeanie, you say he has broken your heart."

"Oh, that's true, that's true, Miss Eesabell. I hope you have nae laud. It's awfu' hard to bear in your ain family, but it's waur, it's waur when it's your laud, and ye can hae nae confidence in him. He has just broken my heart."

Isabel's eyes were full of awe, yet of youthful severity. "But, Jeanie, a lad like that is not for you; you said all was ended between you."

The girl dried her wet eyes with a hurried hand. "It's easy speaking, it's easy speaking," she said: and then, "Miss Eesabell, how often were we to forgive?—no seeven times, but seeventy times seeven."

John was marching on before, waving his cane. He would not take any notice of the whispering or the crying. Perhaps he was glad to see his sister occupied with Robbie Baird's shortcomings, and therefore unable to inquire what the fisher had meant. And what did Rob know, or what could he mean? only to save himself a little by implying that all young men were the same. But John was not aware that he had ever made a woman cry as Jeanie Young was crying. If he "went wrong" a little, nobody else was the worse for it, nobody was made unhappy. The people at home might take fancies into their heads, but they did not understand. So that, on the whole, this encounter helped him to shake off the burden that was more or less on his heart. He lingered a little at the point where the road to Wallyford crossed the highway to Edinburgh; waiting till the girls should have finished their talk. Just as Isabel joined him with her grave face, a phaeton came dashing by, recklessly driven, with two men in the front seat and one behind. The horse was stopped for a second while the latter person jumped down—but went on with such a rush that he was propelled violently forward, and saved himself with difficulty from a fall. It was almost at Isabel's feet that this precipitate descent was made, and her brother stepped forward between her and the stranger hurriedly. The dust had swept round them like a whirlwind. "Have you hurt yourself?" John asked—then started, and there ensued a greeting which still more surprised the bewildered Isabel, before whom so many new experiences were crowding. "Cameron!" the stranger cried. He had a "nice" voice. In Scotland, as everybody knows, there is a great prejudice in favour of "an English accent." It sounds refined and superior to simple ears; and the newcomer possessed this charm. Isabel, after the pain of the meeting with Robbie Baird and poor Jeanie, was glad to escape to some more cheerful impression. But John did not seem to share her feelings. His voice in reply had no pleasure in it. It sank low, as it had a way of doing, becoming deep bass when John was displeased. Without any pretence at civility he said, with something like a growl, "*You* here?"

"Yes; I am here, as you see," the other young man said pleasantly. Isabel could scarcely keep from whispering a word to her brother about his rudeness. As it was, she looked at him with an admonitory glance. The stranger was younger than John, lightly built, with crisp and curling brown hair, and a genial light in his eyes—or so, at least, Isabel thought. "I saw you as we passed," he said; "and you know I always wanted to see the home you are so faithful to——"

"Oh! so you have come to spy into the—land," said John, angrily. "You had much better have stopped where you were."

"John!" Isabel felt herself compelled to interfere. Such rudeness was without parallel in her experience. When a friend arrived suddenly, there was but one thing to be done with him, and that was to take him home to tea.

The stranger laughed, and took off his hat. "Oh! I don't mind," he said; "I am used to him. He is not so bad as he seems. Perhaps you will introduce me to your sister, Cameron. We see a great deal of each other," he added, not waiting for the introduction. But while the newcomer smiled and talked, John stood like a thundercloud. His countenance had grown sullen and full of wrath. He stood obstinately at the corner, in all the dust, not moving. Isabel was more and more shocked by his incivility.

"We have been taking a walk," she said, to smooth matters down. "We have been seeing some people that are not—very happy. And the sun is hot and confusing——"

"Everybody ought to be happy," said the stranger, with enthusiasm, "in such a country, with such companions as your brother has——"

"Oh!" said Isabel, with a little rising colour, "no doubt Mr.—this gentleman, John—has heard of papa! We are just going home," she continued, embarrassed, "to tea. I am sure my mother would be glad to see—any friend of John's, to tea."

"He doesn't acknowledge me," said the stranger, with a laugh.

"Come along, then," said John almost roughly. "Isabel, this is Mansfield. You'll find it very dull at Wallyford; but since you are here——"

"He wants to keep his garden of Eden all to himself," said the young man. "We never can get him to make any engagements for the Sunday, Miss Cameron. He is always due at home, he tells us. I hope you make a great deal of him when you have him. He is more faithful to you than any fellow of his age I ever saw."

Isabel looked up brightly, gratefully, at her brother. Robbie Baird's insinuation flew to the winds. Even John melted a little at this tribute to him, which was evidently quite unexpected. He said in a softened voice, "I like

coming home. You fellows don't understand what a refreshment it is. However, it is a very quiet place, and my father and mother are old-fashioned people. One must put on country ways and country ideas. My mother will not like to hear even that you arrived upon us in the dust out of a Sunday excursion. You had better hold your tongue about that."

Isabel looked up wistfully. "My mother does not like us to hold our tongues about anything, John."

"I understand," said Mansfield. "Mrs. Cameron does not like Sunday excursions, but she likes the truth. I will tell her the truth, Cameron. If she is angry with me, I can't help it; perhaps I may learn to love your Scotch Sunday at—did you say Wallyford? We have different ideas where I was born."

And then he began to tell Isabel that he had been born in France, and how different everything was there. He told her about the French villages, where the people were not wicked people, though they did many things that were strange to her. The way to Wallyford, though it was a long way, seemed short to Isabel as he talked; he had seen the world, that great, brilliant earth beyond the ken of simple folk, which seemed to the inexperienced girl so much wider, so much fairer, than the humble corner which she knew. John's friend, whatever was his reason, had made up his mind to please the family to which he was thus suddenly introduced. At Wallyford he was received with the warmest simple hospitality. Mrs. Cameron was as hospitable as Abraham when he received the angels unawares. It did not suit with her old-fashioned ideas of politeness to ask who was the guest, or how he came there; as soon as he set his foot across the threshold of the house, nothing that was in the house was too good to be set before the stranger. She made him sit at her right hand, and served him with the best. The hush of the Sunday evening was upon the quiet house; there was no attendance at the meal except what Isabel gave. The bowl of roses on the table, the fragrance of the great bushes outside coming in through the open window, the sunshine dropping lower and lower till it came in level through the small-paned windows, all seemed to charm the young man. And after the first sacred duty of attention to the guest, as a guest, the two old people began to remember that here was some one who belonged to that unknown portion of their son's life which cost them so many alarms. But Mansfield talked of it as if it had been the fairest chapter of young life ever written. "He will never come with us on Sunday," he said, "I understand now why; he is better off at home."

"Oh," said Mrs. Cameron, "if you young lads would but think what a fine thing is a Sunday at home! You are young: I hope I make allowances for you; and if sometimes you forget your Creator in the days of your youth—we all forget—I hope the prayers of your parents will be heard. We old folk, we have little to do in this world but to pray for our bairns."

"There are no old folk to pray for me," said the young man, "and I have no home to go to now. Perhaps I was not so thankful for it when I had it as I ought to have been; but John is happy, Mrs. Cameron, he ought to be better than the rest of us." John's mother looked at him with glistening eyes.

"I do not know you," she said, "but every other woman's son is precious to me: and, if you like to come, here is a home aye open, and prayers for those that need. I do not know ye, Mr. Mansfield——"

"And perhaps I am not worthy," he said.

"I'll no think that; the Lord knows; those that have no mother, my poor lad, have a right to every mother's prayers. Come with John, whenever you will," said the kind woman out of her large heart.

Was she right? She was Isabel's mother too, and perhaps she should have guarded with more care the sacred threshold of her home.

To be continued.

Meditations.

By the Rev. Geo. Matheson, D.D.

XII.

"And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain."—Matthew v. 1.

To me it is ever from a height that Thou speakest. Whenever I hear Thee, immediately I am on the plain and Thou art on the mountain. Thy most earthly words cannot make Thee earthly; the accent is unmistakably from above. As it is not difficult to tell him that hath seen better days, even so Thy speech betrayeth Thee. No meanness can wholly mar Thy visage, no poverty or suffering can altogether shroud that beauty that is fairer than the children of men. Thou art divine in the workshop of Nazareth, divine in the dust of death. The elevation of Thy words is more remarkable from the lowliness of their theme. Thy sermon comes from the Mount, but it deals not with things which the world calls lofty. Thou speakest not to the great, but to the lowly, and the burden of Thy speech is not the mountains but the valleys. Thou callest blessed what the world calls contemptible. We have made thrones for the proud; Thou givest the kingdom to the poor in spirit. We have wreathed laurels for the prosperous; Thou hast blessed the mourners. We have assigned the earth to the aggressors; Thou hast promised it to the meek. We have made heroes of the warmakers; Thou hast pronounced the peacemakers the children of God. We have declared happiness to belong to the self-satisfied; Thou hast said that the hungering and thirsting alone shall be filled. When Thou speakest every valley is exalted until it becomes a mountain. The world's great things grow mean, and the world's mean things grow great. The dark places of the earth shine with a new significance in the light which Thy words have shed around them. Thou hast singled out for Thy rest the labouring and the heavy-laden, and hast made the last of earth the first of heaven. Unto whom can we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of everlasting life. We have but the words of the fleeting hour; we use the language of this world's fashion, and the fashion of this world passeth away. But Thy words are for all time. They are as fresh to-day as they were on the shores of Galilee. Years cannot antiquate them. Change cannot make them obsolete. The inundation of a thousand new civilisations cannot sweep them away. They are on the top of the mountains, and therefore they are invulnerable by the floods below. In my highest moments I must still look up to Thee. In myriads of ascending worlds I shall never reach Thee, for the height whereon Thou standest is infinite, and Thy voice is the voice of the Eternal.

Some churches are like hotels; people go there, have their room and their food, pay their bill and go away, knowing nothing of those under the same roof, having no sympathy, no common feeling, and not caring to have any.—*St. Giles' Parish Magazine.*

WALLYFORD.

By Mrs. Oliphant.

Chapter III.

ISABEL got up early to see her brother away. She walked with him a long stretch of the road in the early sunshine. The morning was bright, though there were indications that it might soon cloud over. The hills of Fife, showing blue over the blue Firth, looked so near that you could fancy them within reach of your hand, and the whole landscape was radiant with a light which in our climate never lasts.

"Inchkeith has sailed in the night; look how near it is!" said Isabel; "you could throw a stone on to the island."

"That means it will rain before the afternoon," said John, looking very weather-wise. "When I was last at Inchkeith in Mansfield's yacht——"

"Has Mr. Mansfield a yacht?" his sister said, with a little awe in her voice. To people who have had to consider all their expenses all their lives, and never spend a sixpence without thought, and who know how much trouble it takes to earn money, it is a wonderful mystery to see the idle lords of existence doing nothing but spending it. A man who had a yacht and a tandem (for it was Mansfield's tandem which John had been driving, he told her the evening before), and who had lived abroad, and had nothing to do, appeared like a young prince to Isabel's innocent fancy.

"Oh, he is well enough off," said John, with a grand air, as if this were the most general thing in the world; "or at least he ought to be, for he spends right and left. All the same, if he comes when I am away, you had better give him the cold shoulder."

"What is the cold shoulder?" said Isabel, half affronted. She said to herself that if her father and mother chose to admit Mr. Mansfield she had nothing to do with it—and certainly they must know better than John.

"I don't know him so well as he pretended," John said. "He is not exactly of our set. He had no call to come and look me out; and mind what I say, Bell, he is not a fellow for you to know."

"Then how can he be a fellow for you to know?" retorted Isabel; which is the kind of question women often put, and men find it hard to answer. As she walked home again she could not help thinking over this little episode. A stranger was a rare thing in Wallyford, and John's acquaintance was quite unlike anybody Isabel had ever seen before. She knew nothing of him, which was of itself a wonderful attraction; and she had been warned against him, which has a perverse charm too. It was like sailing up an unknown river into a new country, with strange villages on the banks and everything new. It was like the beginning of a story in which you can imagine all kinds of things happening, and your imagination has free scope; but all this turned into actual life, which is more exciting than anything in a book. Isabel's acquaintances were but few. It is true, she knew, after a sort, the "haill parish," and all the fisher folk, from Robbie Baird to the patriarchs of the community; but that was a different thing from knowing people who were "like herself," as Mrs. Cameron said. It is rather difficult to explain what kind of people they were who were "like ourselves." They were not rich people nor grand people: the county families had not the least acquaintance with the little house at Wallyford: but the Camerons were what our grandmothers called "genteel people" all the same. The nearest to them were the minister's family and the doctor; but the minister was a widower with only one son, and the doctor had married late in life, and had a wife who was quite occupied with her children, and had no time for visiting. As she pondered, walking along, after she had left her brother, of all that was going on, Isabel thought a good deal of Mr. Mansfield; and thinking of him made her think of the only other person at all to be compared with him whom she had ever known. This was another Robert—Rob Bruce, the son of the minister, who was now far away in India, or somewhere equally distant, Isabel did not quite know where. No one ever spoke of him to Isabel, for indeed it had been partly to break off a boy-and-girl attachment between them that poor Rob had gone away so suddenly, three years ago, though she was now but nineteen. She smiled a little herself at the thought. Except that she had been flattered and pleased by the idea of having a lover when she was little more than a child, I do not think that Isabel's mind had ever been much occupied by Rob Bruce; but she remembered him gratefully still, and affectionately, as having been so "fond of her" three years ago. He was not at all like Mr. Mansfield. He had no yacht nor horses, nor did he speak with an English accent. He had gone out from the office to which he belonged, partly to make his way in another office abroad, as being trustworthy and high-principled, and all that a good merchant ought to be; and partly because he was likely to make a fool of himself and marry (if the fathers and mothers would have consented) when he was too young to take such a step. If he had remained, Isabel, in all probability, would have been made a foolish little wife at sixteen; for though she was too young to know what she was doing, yet she liked Rob very well, and was flattered by his love, and had no particular objection to attain the grandeur of a married lady while yet not much more than a child. This was what made her blush now at the thought of Rob. She had thought of him often with a little smile and sigh, pleased with this romantic episode in her young life, yet equally pleased that it had come to nothing. She had thought, too, with a little agreeable excitement, of what might happen when he came home. But why should she associate him with Mr. Mansfield? Isabel blushed again as she asked herself this question. She knew by instinct that Mr. Mansfield's appearance would not be agreeable to Rob Bruce, but if you ask me why, I cannot tell. She could not have told herself, but she knew it. She laughed half-guiltily as she strayed along the sunny road that August morning. She was a good girl, but her heart was light, and life all bright and full of pleasure before her. She found a little fun in everything, and she was not without a sense of mischievous amusement in the sudden picture of Rob's black looks and Mr. Mansfield's civilities that crossed her fancy. Things will have come to a strange pass in the world when a girl does not feel a certain pleasure in her power to make one or two persons happy or unhappy. Isabel could not help being amused in spite of herself.

But as she came slowly along, pleased with the bright world and the clearness of the morning and her own thoughts, a little cloud came over her firmament at the sight of another figure on the way, crossing the high road towards the Fisherstown—the same way she had come on the previous day with John. She had just remarked to herself, with a sudden smile and sensation of pleasure, that here was the very spot where the stranger of yesterday sprang down from the carriage, almost falling at her feet, when this other appeared, who was not a stranger, and whose appearance suggested thoughts that were far from pleasant. The cloud came up over her face, as she recognised him, with much the same effect as when a cloud comes over the sky. The little bit of sunny road on which she walked darkened round her, though the figure was no worse than that of a handsome young fisherman, robust and strongly made, with vigorous red brown hair, all full of twists and curls that looked like a mere exuberance of life, clustering about his ears, and his bonnet on the back of his head. Robbie Baird was as light-hearted as Isabel herself, though not so innocent. There was a laugh in his dark eyes which lighted up his whole face—but he stopped short in front of her and took off his bonnet, and folded his hands with an air of penitence, with the bonnet folded between them.

"I have to beg your pardon, Miss Easabell," Robbie said; but his laughing eyes contradicted his penitential air. All the same, he did not feel at all proud of himself as he stood in the sunshine, and saw the clouding over of the girl's face.

"I do not know for what, Rob," she said, with a little offence, for immediately there had risen before her a recollection of all that had been said.

"I was ill-bred," said Robbie; "it maun be sae since they a' tell me, or I wouldna hae believed it o' myself, that I could be unmannerly to a leddy; but when drink's in wisdom's oot, you ken—or at least, ye dinna ken; that's the worst and the best of women folk."

Moved by that last aspersion upon the female character, Isabel answered hastily, "Do not speak to me, please, of anything of the kind."

"You're mair angry than them that hae greater reason," said the fisherman; "but I havena a word to say. I would get nae mair than my due if you were never to ware a word on me again; for a' the kindness I've had frae the captain, and a' the guid advice—that I have never taken, ye will say; but yet I maun beg your pardon, Miss Easabell. If it had been anither laud that had put his lazy body in your gait—Lord! but I wuss I had been there to knock him down."

In spite of herself, Isabel smiled at this curious expression of penitence; then her face clouded over again. "O Robbie, you are right; there are some that have greater reason, far greater reason, than I have. How can you vex so good a lass? You will break Jeanie's heart."

Robbie twisted his blue bonnet in his hands, and looked down sheepish, yet not without a certain humour still. "No so bad as that, no so bad as that," he said.

"But it is as bad as that; she said you had broken her heart; she said it was over between her and you."

"Ah, but she's changed her mind. It would take mair than the like o' that to part Jeanie and me," said Rob, still with a wavering smile upon his face.

"She has changed her mind, because she cannot change her heart," cried Isabel, with all the severity of a youthful judge; "and you laugh! That is all you think of it. And next Sunday Jeanie will go to the kirk and watch for you coming in, and pray and cry behind her Bible: and then walk down the street in her Sunday gown, so neat and so bonnie, with a sore heart, trying to fancy that something has happened, that it's not your fault. And she will see you sitting there—— You were a fine sight last Sabbath day, Robbie Baird!" cried the girl, drawing up her slight figure, feeling half as tall again as the big sinner before her, "sitting in the bonnie summer sun, so near the bonnie quiet sea, still, still, like as if it was giving thanks. You were giving no thanks, nor anybody for you: dozing with your bonnet over your een like a big dog in the sun, your sea-clothes on, and your heart—where was your heart? Not with God, nor yet with Jeanie——"

"You may ken aboot my sea-clothes, and that I wasn't just, the outside o' me, what I might have been," said Robbie, colouring high with shame and offence; "but as for my heart, that's for nobody to judge; and Miss Easabell, you're but a young lass—you're no' a minister to preach——"

This brought a corresponding flush upon Isabel's face. "If you think a minister," she cried, "knows better what is in a woman's mind! Jeanie is a young lass like me; and if you knew, if you only knew, the shame and the disgust, as well as the misery!—would you like to think that your wife hated the sight of you?"

He gave a confused yet triumphant laugh. "No much fear o' that."

"You think so!" cried Isabel; "and that is just what a young lass can tell you better than a minister. But she will: Jeanie, that is so fond of you—Jeanie, that cannot give you up—could not bide the sight of you that day! she hated the light that showed you to her, and her eyes that saw you. She would rather be a blind woman and never see the sun again, than see you like that. Now, Robbie Baird, you can go away if you like, and do the same next Sabbath day, and think I am a young lass and have no right to speak. And I would not speak if you had not spoken to me; but it's true what I tell you. Jeanie abhorred the sight of you, if that's a stronger word," cried the girl, flushing with fiery and beautiful indignation, and bringing out the hard sound of those consonants as only a Scotch voice can do, "and so did I!"

With these words Isabel swept on, indignant, holding her head high in the excitement of this quite unusual effort. The girl's heart was stirred, she could not tell why. The miseries of the world had begun to dawn upon her, or rather the miseries that men make for themselves in the world, and that women (she thought) have to suffer. This was the first breaking for her of the illusions of the lovely earth and the smiling skies and her youth. She had made this one discovery—that a household can be made miserable and a girl's heart broken, because of what another person laughs at and considers amusement. She had intended, with caution and care, to inquire of Robbie when she met him, what he had meant by the words he had flung at her brother, the insinuations that John was no more innocent than himself; but all her intentions had gone to the winds in the sudden impulse of the moment, the flush of hot indignation that had come over her. She was not a minister—no—she was only a young lass. The minister would have spoken far more solemnly to Robbie. But, perhaps, it was just as well that they should know what a young lass thought. Isabel had not a doubt that every woman was of her opinion. No illumination had been afforded her as to the possible evils on the other side.

In the afternoon she went out with her father, as was their wont. She had recounted this little episode to her mother, and had been chidden and sympathised with. Mrs. Cameron had sighed out of the depths of her heart, and said, "That is true, that is true, however you came to know it;" for she had concealed the former troubles of the family as much as she could from her child. But she had added, "You are not a minister nor a missionary, my bonnie darlin'. You have no experience to understand the heart. You must not lay a rash hand, as it were, upon the ark, my Bell. It's not for you to teach the like of Robbie Baird. And he might be impudent to you."

"Oh no, no," cried Isabel, with a flush of warm partisanship, "Robbie might go wrong like *yon*, but never, never, would he say a word. I don't understand it, mamma; what is the meaning of it? He will break Jeanie's heart; but he would not harm a fly, nor wrong anybody, nor say an unkind word. He's a *good* lad, and yet he goes wrong—what does it mean?"

Mrs. Cameron had put her apron to her eyes. "The Lord He knows, the Lord He knows," she murmured to herself; "that is the mystery of this life, Isabel. When it's an ill man, it is not so hard to understand. But you will see them that have their Maker's image stamped upon them, and yet that will take the wrong turning, and ruin their bonnie lives, and break their parents' hearts."

"And Jeanie's too," the girl said, with a wistful look.

"Ay, and many a Jeanie. Wives and bairns, and honour and credit, and all that's worth having in this world and the next. But you must not speak to me about this, my darlin', for I'm a foolish woman, and it makes my heart sick: nor think too much upon it yourself; you're too young for such thoughts; put on your hat, and take your walk with your father. It will rain before night, and you should take the advantage of the good day while it lasts."

Captain Cameron had but one walk that he really cared about—the fields and the lanes, he acknowledged, were very pleasant, and on a fine Sunday morning the walk by the side of the rustling, golden corn, almost ready for the shearers, would fill the old man with pleasure; but for his own choice he always went the way of

the Fisherstown, threading his way through all the smells without wincing, and steering carefully through all the children, and the nets and creels that confused the way, to the pier, where he would sit, when it was not too cold, and watch the boats come in, and the waves dashing against the sea-wall. The fresh, salt breeze was life to him, he said, and there was no sound in the world so sweet as the soft hush of the water when it was calm, running softly up and breaking into smiles on the beach. When he was ill, and had to keep indoors, that was the thing he always wished for; if he could hear the soft ripple coming up, the sh-sh of the broken water sweeping back again into the sea. But he always made a little pretence at choosing a new direction for his daily walk. "Where will we go to-day?" he would say, when they issued forth, he so proud of his young daughter, she so proud of her old father, with Mrs. Cameron watching and smiling at them from the staircase window in the turret. He took off his hat every day to his old wife, and he said, "Where will we go, Isabel?" Sometimes he even went so far as to suggest a new walk, but usually he would add, with a twinkle in his eye, "It's a fine day for the sea; I think we'll take a turn, if you've no objection, as far as the pier." What with his rheumatism and the old wounds that gave him so much trouble at times, the old sailor walked but slowly, and the walk was consequently a long business; but it was never tedious to Isabel. She told her father a hundred things that were nothing, and yet the very essence of life; about all her books that she was reading—the old books which he had known for years, and yet found quite fresh through the eyes of his child; and all her thoughts, and what she would do if she could, and what she thought she could do if what she would do failed her. There is no such sweet companion as a girl upon the edge of life, except sometimes, but not always, a boy in the same sweet season; but the boy is more self-occupied, more full of his own doings and pleasures, which are apart from his home, than a girl. There is more imagination and less fact in her. Isabel's soft voice ran along the rural roads like an accompaniment to their measured steps, now and then stopping to give room for her father's slower bass. The people in the houses which they passed habitually looked out for them with friendly nods and smiles from their windows. "How's a' wi' ye the day, Captain?" the old fishers said. "I'm doubting we'll ha'e a change o' weather," or, "I hope your rheumatism's better. If onything will do it good, it will be this bonnie day—if it will but last."

"It'll not last," Captain Cameron said on this particular afternoon, "but we'll take the good of it as long as it keeps up."

"It'll keep up till tea-time, in my opeenion," said old Sandy on the pier; "and there's a boat coming in wi' a grand take o' haddies, which is aye a bonnie sight."

The boat was in before they got to the pier, and when the captain reached his usual seat, was lying by the quay displaying all its silver load of fish. It was a curious scene, and what a stranger would have thought of it I cannot tell. On the very edge of the pier were clustered a crowd of women, so closely packed together and overhanging the edge, that you would have supposed a slight push anywhere would have precipitated the whole vociferating mass into the depths below. Some were kneeling, some standing, all leaning over each other's shoulders, pushing upon each other, keeping up one continuous scream to the fishers in the boat. It looked like vituperation, a gigantic scolding match, every virago among them menacing the laughing fishers with uplifted hands and shrill voices; but it was only a peaceful process of commerce, the fishwives—to whom it belonged to carry on the further part of the business—making offers for the fish, so much for so much. Captain Cameron liked the amusement of the scene. He sat down upon his usual seat to rest, and looked out upon them all like a benevolent old king.

"But why should they make so much noise?" said Isabel, more fastidious, laughing, and putting her fingers in her ears.

"The sea makes a kittle accompaniment," said the old sailor. "It's louder than a piano; you must speak out, or you've little chance—and when it's quiet now and then, you forget. That's a grand haul, Sandy," said the old man. Sandy was the keeper of the pier, and signalled the boats, and hoisted the flag on great occasions, and took charge of everything.

"Ye may say that, Captain: and mair coming," replied Sandy.

While her father talked with the other old sailor about the weather, and the direction in which the clouds lay, and all those recondite intimations of what is coming, which are so clear to the initiated, Isabel turned her eyes to the sea. Her troublesome thoughts had flown away, the firmament of her young mind was as blue as the blue sky, treacherously clear and brilliant, out of which, the experts were aware, torrents of angry rain would be pouring in a few hours. How did they know? Isabel, herself, was sufficiently weather-wise to be aware that when the Fife hills looked so near, and Inchkeith, so to speak, within reach of your hand, that evil was brewing. But yet, as she looked out upon sea and sky so brilliant and fresh, she could scarcely help a laugh of incredulity at all these prognostics. Was it possible that in a few hours the whole prospect would be blurred and black in the rain, the Firth dashing dark and angry against the rocks, the sky as black as night? She laughed to herself at the impossibility, and yet she knew it was true. Just then a little white sail caught her eye close to the pier; there was just air enough to swell its whiteness, to carry it a little way to and fro on the blue waves. She watched it with pleasant interest, for who can refuse to be pleased by the sight of a boat, giving life and movement to a sunlit stretch of water, tacking and changing, curtseying to the light winds, moving about in fantastic capricious sweeps like a living thing? How pleasant it would be to sail about like this on the summer sea, independent, going just where one pleased, stopping where one would, dreaming with eyes fixed on the unfathomable sky, while so swiftly, softly, carried over the unfathomable water, between two infinites! It came close to the pier as she looked at it envying the pleasure-sailers. She had not even begun to wonder who they were, when the sail was taken down hastily, the little yacht pulled alongside the pier, and some one jumped out upon the rude steps and ran lightly up to the place where Captain Cameron was seated. "I felt sure it was you," she heard a voice saying. She heard it as if in a dream, and it was not to her the stranger was speaking:—"I felt sure it was you; my little yacht is there, and it would be such an honour to our seamanship if you would come with us for an hour; won't you come, Captain? She is a nice little craft, though I say it that shouldn't; come and look at her, come and take a seat in her. The breeze is delicious, and the water is as smooth as glass. Miss Cameron would like it to-day."

"You are John's friend, Mr. Mansfield?" said the old captain; "I am glad to see you again. Your yacht, my lad? Is it that little pleasure thing with the big sail?"

"I am reproved," said the young man. "You are quite right, it is too small to be called a yacht; but it is big enough to carry you out on the Firth, and it is delightful to-day. Won't you come, sir? Give us the pleasure—and Miss Cameron too."

"The weather is going to change," said Captain Cameron.

"But no afore tea-time, Captain," said old Sandy, "take a look at the glass. It might hold up till seven or eight o'clock, but it'll no come on afore tea-time. The youngsters can manage the bit boat, and it would be a pleasure to Miss Easabell."

"What do you say, Isabel?" said the old captain. He shook his head, but when he saw the glow of pleasure

that came over his child's face, the old man's heart was soft. What could he refuse to Isabel? And John's friend looked a likely young fellow in his sailor's dress, touching his cap with such a smart salute, that the old man-o'-war's man was propitiated in spite of himself. "I'm too heavy for such a bit cockle-shell," he said, yielding with every word.

"Hout, Captain," cried Sandy, "it has carried heavier weights than you: and I'll assure you till tea-time." Meanwhile young Mansfield was making his suit apart to Isabel.

"You can't think how delightful the Firth is. Come and make the day perfect," he said. "It only wants you—r father," he added, with a laugh, modifying the too great boldness of the compliment—"and you. It will be an honour for us to carry Captain Cameron."

"I think he would like it," Isabel said, shily. Who would not have liked it? Between them, they persuaded the old captain, who was got with some difficulty down the steps and into the boat. The little vessel gave a lurch when he got into it, which justified his own fear about his weight, but that soon righted, and before Isabel had mastered the idea, she found herself as she had been dreaming half an hour before—floating between the sea and the sky, between the two infinites, the sail caught by the soft breeze, flying as if it would lift the boat out of the water, then dropping as the wind fell, the sea rushing, yet so softly, along the side of the little vessel, now and then dashing a handful of white spray over the bows, playing with her like a toy. The old captain lay back in the stern, with a serene air of enjoyment.

"There is no-thing like the sea," he said; "but you must take care, my lads, you must take care. It is playing itself just now, and playing with your bit boat; but you must promise me to leave her in the harbour with old Sandy, and not to go to Leith in her to-night."

Mr. Mansfield, Isabel thought, had the most beautiful manners. He touched his cap again, "All right, sir," he said; "we won't disobey orders. When you do us the honour to come aboard of us, it is not to have your opinions slighted. We thought of running back to Leith and chancing it."

"I never approve of chancing anything," said the old sailor; "look before you, and make your plans accordingly, has always been my maxim at sea. At sea, ay, and on land too. The only exception is when you're in the way of duty. When it is a thing that has to be done, or in the way of saving life, or to obey orders, I am not the man to bid you mind storm or gale; but chancing it, chancing it has never been a way of mine."

"I suppose there's no such thing as chance," said Mansfield's companion. "I believe in fate. If it's to be, it will be, storm or fine, that's my principle: and with that, you needn't mind what you do, in my opinion. If you're to drown, you'll drown in the finest weather. If you ain't to drown——"

"You'll be hanged, perhaps," said Mansfield, angrily. "Can't you hold your tongue, you fool?" he added, in a lower tone. "Is this the time to show off with your confounded principles? Can't you hold your tongue? I am sure you are right, sir," he added, louder; "but the dark and the risk make one's heart beat. Not when we have such a freight, though," he said, with a look aside at Isabel.

She had heard everything he said, and she looked askance under the shadow of the sail at his companion, who was not nearly so "nice" as Mr. Mansfield. This did not do her new friend any harm in Isabel's eyes. Indeed, she did not think of it at all. She gave herself up to the pleasure of the moment—the heavenly quiet in which she seemed floating, the exhilarating freshness of the air, the charm of this novel, strange meeting. What a delightful plunge it was into the unknown!! Her heart beat quicker, yet softly, with a secret elation and content, and her father, full of a pleasant excitement too, talked on, she scarcely knew of what, his kind, familiar voice running on like a pleasant recitative to the accompaniment of the soft plashing of the water and sibillation of the wind. Was ever anything so delightful, so momentary, so sweet? For it seemed not half an hour, not ten minutes, till they were at the pier again, standing looking out once more upon the Firth as if they never had been on it at all.

"Sandy, my man, you will take great care of the gentlemen's boat," the captain said with authority, waiting till he saw them land. How rightly they felt about papa! Isabel thought, obeying him without a word, though Mansfield laughed and the other looked sulky. Then the old captain gave them a solemn invitation, which made Isabel's heart beat still higher. There was a moment's consultation, and then the other one, he whom Isabel in her heart called "the sulky one," declined it. Mansfield, on the contrary, gave her a look which glowed with pleasure. "If you think Mrs. Cameron will excuse my boating dress?" he said.

"And it'll be all you can do, wi' the captain's wake leg, to get hame," said old Sandy, "afore the storm comes on."

To be continued.

Meditations.

By the Rev. Geo. Matheson, D.D.

XIII.

"The same came to Jesus by night."—John iii. 2.

NIGHT is the true season for coming to Thee. To come by day would be impossible. If I am in the light, I am already in Thee; Thou art Thyself the day. But the night is my very need of Thee, the very distance which makes coming possible. Night alone separates me from Thee; there is no twilight between us, the twilight is itself the beginning of Thee. Whence then shall I come but through the night? I cry to Thee because I have lost my way, and the one comfort is that I know I have lost it. If the night had been my birthright, I should not have learned my darkness. My vision of the night must be the reminiscence of an ancient day. I could not seek to escape from that which was my nature. Night cannot be the law of my being. If it were, I would not call it night, or by any name which would suggest my knowledge of a contrast with the day. I come to Thee because I have recognised the darkness to be darkness, and have thereby prefigured the image of the light. I come to Thee because the image of the light makes the darkness darker in my soul. I come to Thee because through the knowledge of my darkness I am in fear—the child's nameless fear, whose source is ignorance and whose issue is unrest. O Light of the world, rise upon the shadows of my heart. Though it be but a dawn in the east, though it be but a star over a manger, there will, there must, be healing in Thy rising. When I see Thy star I shall rejoice with an exceeding great joy. Meantime the darkness must itself be my star. The night must lead me to the day. The sense of nothingness must be the harbinger of almighty power. The load of conscious sin must prepare the way for the Sin-bearer, and the box of ointment must be broken ere it can yield its fragrance. I must wrap myself in the night-shadows when I come to Thee.

WALLYFORD.

By Mrs. Oliphant.

Chapter IV.

MRS. CAMERON made no objection to the boating-dress of her unexpected visitor; but she said, "I'm doubting you will not get home to-night—not but what we have a bed for you and a welcome—but they will perhaps be anxious."

"I have nobody to be anxious about me; but I don't mind the storm, and I will not think of giving so much trouble," said young Mansfield.

"Trouble!" cried Mrs. Cameron, and "trouble!" said Marget behind, hearing the conversation, with a laugh of kindly ridicule. There was nobody they would not have taken in, in the kindness of their hearts, to escape the storm which began to rage outside. The little party had just got in in time. Scarcely had they crossed the threshold, when the first big drops began to pour out of the sky, and everything grew dark in the brewing of the storm. There was some time to wait before they sat down to their evening meal, for Mrs. Cameron had a great reverence and awe of the thunder which came on presently. She was not afraid, she said; but she sat with her hands folded and a pale countenance, watching the great flashes of the lightning glancing around, through all the five small windows of the drawing-room, and chequering the darkness, so to speak, with a sudden leaping of intense light which showed everything—the trees unnaturally green, the distant hill in a sudden pale wild glory, standing out against the sky, which was as black as night. The old captain sat and watched it, calculating that now it was so near, and now a little farther off, with his watch in his hand; but his wife was solemnised and subdued by the sight.

"No, I would not say I was afraid," Mrs. Cameron said; "I am not afraid of the good Lord, whatever it may please Him to do; but I cannot be indifferent; I aye mind what was said to me when I was a bairn, that it was the voice of God, and I could not go and sit down at the table with that going on. It would be like eating and drinking, and letting the king's messenger stand all the time at the door." She was not afraid, but she made Isabel sit in a corner as far as possible from the windows and the fireplace. She would not take any such precautions for herself, but sat with her hands folded in her lap, and her eyes fixed upon a window, that none of those wild, sudden leaps of light might escape her. The house altogether was very quiet. Marget downstairs was "not indifferent," any more than her mistress, and she would have been startled had the party come down, and placed themselves at table, while the lightning was flashing and the thunder pealing, and the rain pouring down as if the heavens would empty themselves.

"The Lord preserve onybody belonging to us, that's out in this storm," Marget said, and her mistress's heart was filled with the same thought. Mansfield, for his part, thought it a very strange scene. He got a chair very near that on which Isabel was seated, and ventured to talk to her in a low tone, while the old captain looked at his watch to see how far off the thunder was, and his wife watched every flash that lit up heaven and earth. Mansfield, for his part, was not at all impressed by the storm. He disturbed the mind of Isabel, who was a little nervous, seeing the effect upon her mother, and gave a little suppressed start at every big flash.

"I don't think Morton will like it," he said, with a laugh; "I wonder how far he is on his way by this time. He will bless me for leaving him to walk back by himself."

"But, Mr. Mansfield," said Isabel, still keeping a watchful eye upon the window, "are you not glad that you took papa's advice and left the boat?"

He laughed again. "I am very glad," he said; "for *I* am perfectly happy here, under shelter and in the best of company, but I daresay Morton would have preferred to run before the wind instead of trudging through the mud, even had there been a little danger. A little danger, you know, fires the blood."

"If it was for any good cause," said Isabel.

"Oh, I don't believe in good causes," he said lightly. "I care for the sensation. Nothing is so pleasant in life as a keen sensation. When you feel your heart jump, and your blood go racing, coursing through your veins, it does not much matter what produces it; that is what I like best."

Isabel gave him a little alarmed look. She did not quite understand what he meant.

"I shouldn't mind living on the edge of a volcano," he said. "There would be a pleasure in being always on the strain, not knowing if to-morrow you might be sent spinning through the air, like gamblers or stockbrokers ——." And he laughed again.

"Oh whisht," said Mrs. Cameron. "We should not laugh nor joke, but think upon the seriousness of our life when all earth and heaven are struggling like that."

"If I were not here," said Mansfield, whispering, though he made a little bow of grave submission to Mrs. Cameron, in which Isabel had an uneasy feeling that there was some exaggeration—"if I were not here, I should like to be out in it, struggling too."

"But stockbroking?" said Isabel, whose mind was full of curiosity over every new idea. "John is in a stockbroker's office. He thinks it is dull—there is nothing there like spinning through the air."

"Ah, he is with a set of respectable old fogeys; wait till he is speculating on his own account and putting everything to the touch. I beg you a thousand pardons, Mrs. Cameron. I am very well off. I never was more happy. How can I help laughing a little? I will do any penance you please to-morrow, but let me be happy to-day. How can I help it?" said the young man. Mrs. Cameron was at that moment half-blinded by an extraordinarily brilliant flash. She did not see the look which the stranger directed towards Isabel—a look which seemed to give Isabel that very keenness of sensation which he had been speaking of. Her heart jumped, and the blood seemed to quicken in all her veins—why? she was too much confused to know—but her eyes sank beneath his look. Why was he so glad to be beside her, so incapable of anything but happiness in the quiet little dull room where John yawned, and where sometimes even Isabel herself felt as if she were taking root in the great stillness? Why was a gentleman, a stranger, so happy here that he could not help laughing for pleasure? Isabel was confused beyond measure, and could not lift her eyes; but somehow it made her happy too.

"We may go down now to our tea in peace and quiet," said the captain, shutting up his large, heavy old watch, "that last one was a grand one; but the storm has gone over our heads. It's travelling the way of Edinburgh, but it's worn itself out here."

"The Lord keep all them that are out in it, travelling by land or by sea," said Mrs. Cameron; and in this devout wish and the thoughts that gave rise to it, she overlooked altogether the visitor and his looks and his words. Mansfield made the evening gay to all the family. He drew out the captain by clever questions, and got him to tell those old stories which always excited the old man still; and he told Mrs. Cameron pleasant anecdotes of John, which made her face bright. Isabel had a sort of uneasy sense that these delightful stories did not chime in well with what she knew of her brother's character and habits, and it seemed to her that once, in the midst of her father's description of one of the battles he had been in during his warlike career, there was a contraction of the muscles about Mr. Mansfield's mouth that looked something like an incipient yawn; but when he turned to herself, the admiration and devotion in

his eyes, his eagerness to please her, his words which seemed to imply so much more than they said, confused her so that all these doubtfulnesses went to the winds. The evening flew as no evening had flown in Wallyford for a long time. He persuaded Isabel to sing to him when they went back to the sitting-room up-stairs; and he sang too in a fine baritone, which seemed to her the most beautiful voice she had ever heard. The rain after a while ceased to patter upon the trees, the clouds rolled away from the sky, the blue appeared again, and by and by the soft whiteness of the moon. And after all his liveliness and brightness Mr. Mansfield was a more delightful companion still when he was subdued by the stillness of the night after all this commotion. He sat down by the corner window, which was open, and gazed out at the soft shadowy landscape, faintly visible for miles around under the shining of the moon, and breathing a refreshed and humid fragrance after the rain.

"How sweet it is!" he said; "one would think the country was grateful for all that pelting and pouring."

"And so it is," said Captain Cameron, "its very heart was dry; it wanted a good pelting to get far enough down."

"And you might say that was a mystery," said Mrs. Cameron, "for the like of us that should know better are sometimes far from grateful when a storm comes, that was just the very best thing for our good."

The room was but poorly lighted with two candles on the table, and Isabel never could be quite sure whether Mansfield did not laugh a little when her mother said this. But if he did, Mrs. Cameron never suspected it. She avowed frankly that she had "never been so much taken with any person" at first sight as with this delightful young Englishman. "The Lord forgive me for doubting my John," she said, with tears of happiness; "to hear all this good lad says of him is a just reproach to me." Isabel was under the spell still more than her mother; but at the bottom of her heart there was a little chilly breath of wonder. She did not know what to think. She was very fond of her brother, but somehow he was not very like the John that figured in Mr. Mansfield's stories. She went to her room with a little vague doubtfulness in her mind. There had been a smile in his eyes when he told these tales; sometimes he had looked as if he could scarcely keep in a burst of laughter. But then, why should he deceive them, why should he laugh at them? Isabel knew no reason why.

And this guest did not want to be up early and off to work, as John did. He had nothing to hurry him. "I have not got any duty to take me away the first thing in the morning, as John has," he said; "more's the pity. You may smile, but I mean what I say. If I had not been so much my own master, if I had not had—well, enough to get on with, without working, I should have been a happier man—and a better man too," he added, with a serious look that went to Mrs. Cameron's heart. She was so pleased with this that she immediately began to comfort him.

"It matters not so much what the hands are doing, so that the heart is right," she said; "and if you have no need to work, it's a sign from the Lord that you're free to do the more for Him."

Mansfield gave Isabel a comical look, as if asking her to laugh with him, then recovered himself in a moment, and made what seemed to her a very becoming reply. And when breakfast was over he strolled out into the garden with Isabel. "I don't know what I have done," he said, "to meet with such a reward. To find this little heaven of a house, and those noble old people—such people as I never had the honour of speaking to before; and you, Miss Cameron——"

Isabel was half angry, but his looks, the reverential tone in which he spoke, all disarmed her; and yet she was not a silly girl, she could not altogether blind those clear, keen-sighted eyes which Providence had given her. "And yet," she said, with a little heat of half irritation with herself as well as him, "and yet, sometimes you can scarcely help laughing at us, though you think so much of us."

"How can I help it?" he said, laughing frankly as he turned upon her. "I cannot believe it is true. What have I to do here? I ask myself; a good-for-nothing, not worthy to be your slave, what right have I to be in such a place? Don't you know, Miss Cameron, that one laughs often when one might just as well cry?" And whether it was real feeling, or something less worthy, there certainly was a gleam of moisture in his eyes. After this, what could Isabel say? Her own heart was full. Supposing that he were not perfect; supposing that he was idle, and gay, and had no very serious aim in life; all these things, most likely, were not in the least his fault. It was not his fault that he was rich, and, to tell the truth, Isabel felt that the novelty of the new apparition in her life of this man without work, without bond, free to do what he liked, possessing everything, enjoying everything, neither toiling nor spinning, doing whatever it pleased him to do, was very captivating to her imagination. It might be excellent that most people should work, and have regular hours, and do what they were told; but just to see one now and then who could do what he liked, without consulting any one, or asking anybody's leave, was quite delightful in its newness and unlikeness to all that she was acquainted with. And supposing he had been careless, as he said, what a thing it would be if he became suddenly—not serious—but just serious *enough:* and gave up all his "carelessness." Isabel did not know what "carelessness" meant. It was a word that stood to her for all that mystery under the surface of life which she regarded with awe and pity, sometimes mingled with indignation. She was indignant at Robbie Baird; but how did she know that Mr. Mansfield ever had been like Robbie Baird? He said he was a good-for-nothing, but then it was only himself that said it. And then, who could tell? coming to Wallyford and seeing papa (Isabel said to herself with a very grave face) might make a change in him, if a change was necessary, so that he should cease to be a good-for-nothing, if a good-for-nothing he was. She was silent, thinking these thoughts, when he spoke again.

"Miss Cameron, your mother, out of her great kindness, has asked me to come with John and stay for the Sunday. I need not say how much I should like to accept her invitation, but I will not come unless you say I may."

"I?" cried Isabel, much startled. She turned and gazed at him with utter surprise before the idea penetrated her mind which made her blush and hastily withdraw her eyes; then she added, shrinking away from him a little, her voice becoming conscious, her breath hurried, "It is not for me to say anything; mamma asks whom she pleases. She never asks anybody unless she wishes them to come, if that is what you mean."

"That is not what I mean," he said, speaking very low; "if you say I may, I will come; I would not come if—I was not to get a welcome from you."

"Oh, Mr. Mansfield, do you think I am such a churl? do you think I am not glad to see—folk?" Isabel cried in her confusion. He had no right to press her so, to ask her such questions, and yet she was not angry. On the contrary, she was half annoyed, though not so much as Mansfield was, when Marget came straight in their way with her basket, walking across their path as if thinking of nothing but her potatoes.

"I'm to get the first new anes the day," Marget said, "the early anes, Miss Eassabell, that were put in last year. Ye were aye awfu' fond o' the first dish o' new petawties, the haill family of ye. Ye'll hae them suner in England?" she said, with a look at the stranger. "It'll be nae treat to you?"

"Everything is better at Wallyford than anywhere else," said Mansfield, who was always ready, whatever the occasion might be; "so you are wrong there; and they will be a treat, as everything is here."

"Eh, Miss Easabell!" said Marget. The unexpected compliment took away her breath. She turned upon him eyes full of surprised gratification. "Eh, Miss Easabell! but the gentleman has a winning tongue o' his ain," she said, shaking her head.

"It is because I want to come back and try your excellent cookery again," he said, laughing. "I always flatter the cook. May I come back, Mrs. Marget, with Mr. John?"

Marget had never been addressed by this respectful title before. She looked at the speaker from head to foot with a very close inspection, which, however, did not embarrass him. There was a little anxiety and a little suspicion in her eyes, and the smile that had been on her face faded away as she examined him. Then, "I see nae reason against it, sir—if onybody asks you," she added, with the smile breaking softly over her countenance again.

It was a face at which it was difficult to look with suspicion, a face so bright with good-temper and enjoyment of life, that but few people could resist it. The greatest deceiver in the world, and Mansfield was not an intentional deceiver, may defy suspicion when he has a light heart and a laughing eye. He bore Marget's gaze with a genuine look of amusement, and no displeasure at all. She went away after a while, to Simon, who was digging the potatoes, with a smile somewhat uneasy, yet half satisfied, upon her face.

"I wuss we could hear mair of him first," she said to her husband. "The captain and the mistress, they're sae wrapped up in the lads that they've nae thought for the lass, though she's the light o' their een. Eh, I'm no blaming them! When I think o' the things that has happened in our family it mak's my heart sick. I'm no blaming them; but they canna see, they canna see that there's that darlin' maybe in danger tae. She's just a little bairn to them. They might have minded there was the Minister's laddie, Maister Robbie, a fine fellow, wantin' to get her when she was but sixteen; but it's a' the lads that exerceese their minds. And here's this new ane that we ken naething about——"

"He's a pleasant lad to speak to," said Simon, throwing up the dainty young potatoes in a spadeful of red-brown earth, while his wife stooped and grasped them by the stalk and shook them out. Simon was a man of few words.

"Pleasant is as pleasant does," said Marget, changing the proverb; "I wuss I heard mair about him, before he got the freedom o' coming and ganging here."

The house was very still that evening after young Mansfield was gone, quieter, surely, than ever it had been before; not that Isabel wanted to talk. She was glad when the daylight died away, and she could not read the paper any longer. But instead of talking, or singing, or running about the house, which was her usual way of keeping it cheerful, and herself too, she sat still in the window, looking out upon the soft twilight that made the landscape indistinct, and then upon the soft moonlight that whitened everything, and turned the dim country into a visionary picture—and thought and dreamed and was quiet, quieter than she had ever been before. Usually she wearied of this twilight hour, which the old people loved, when they would sit without candles and say little, having, as Isabel thought, a pleasure in the very dulness. But it was not dull to Isabel now. She sat at the window as quiet as they were, and thought over again all that happened last night. *He* had sat just there; he had said—she remembered every word he had said. Her heart was giving little faint thuds against her side, so that sometimes she thought they must hear it in the stillness of the room. But nobody heard it; they did not take any notice any more than if she had been a flower growing in a flower-pot. She was safe as the apple of their eye. Between them no sort of harm could come to Isabel, and she was not, they knew, of a kind to take harm. She was as safe as one of the angels. There was nothing to be anxious about, nothing to be troubled about in her. And there, between her father and mother, in the safe bosom of her home, the girl sat and wove her dreams.

It was a long week till Saturday, till John came, and, as if to make it longer, he was very late, not arriving till after dark, till the supper had been put off, and put off, then eaten without him, with very little appetite, and Captain Cameron was about to go to bed. Isabel understood that evening why her mother went and stood at the window in the staircase to look out for John; at least she understood half of the reason. She, too, would have liked to stand at the staircase window. She did better. She remembered the old garret which had once been the favourite playroom, and where, she recollected, by twisting yourself in a difficult way, you could get a glimpse of the road a quarter of a mile off, and watch the distant figures grow larger as they come along. She stood at this window, stretching and twisting her neck, till she was called down to prayers, and then to the supper, which it was so hateful to sit down to, giving *them* up, as it were. At last, when the captain had toiled upstairs, and Mrs. Cameron was insisting that Isabel should follow him, the well-known rattle of the gate was heard, the step on the gravel. But there was but one footstep. John came in alone; he was pale, and dusty, and out of temper, "not like himself." This little formula meant a great deal, but Isabel, as yet, had not quite penetrated its full mystery. "I thought you'd all have been in bed," he said; "why don't you go to bed, mother? I was delayed, I couldn't get home any sooner."

"Oh John, my dear, I wish you had been home sooner," his mother said with a little moan; and then she turned upon Isabel, and bade her "Run away, run away, to your bed."

"I'll tell you why I couldn't get away," said John, with a harsh laugh. "I was getting clear of Mansfield, your friend Mansfield, that wanted to come with me. I as good as told him I wouldn't have him. What d'ye want with that sort o' fellow here?" John ran his words into each other, and laughed again in a foolish way. He was "not like himself."

"Run away, Isabel, run away to your bed," cried Mrs. Cameron, with an impatience very rare to her; "do you hear what I say?"

"Is't for Is'bel?" said John. "Daresay you think that would do?—but it won't do. I as good as told him I wouldn't have——. What d'ye want with him here? What does he want, running after my sis—— ?"

"Will you go, Isabel, will you go when I tell you?" cried the mother who was always so tender, stamping her foot in her impatience. Isabel felt as if it were upon her heart that the stamp sounded. She crept upstairs silently, trembling and sad.

"Has he come?" the captain said, shuffling to the door of his room as she went by. It was all Isabel could do not to answer "No." But they were thinking of nobody but John, John who, after a little while, came also upstairs heavily, stumbling a little, and talking more loudly than usual. No one thought but of him. When Isabel had closed her door, she sank down in a chair by her bedside, and put her hands up to her face. She did not want to cry. Why should she cry? After all, why should he come? what could bring him to this dull, dull, quiet house? It was only her folly that supposed he would do it. Then she got up and opened the window softly, and put out her hot head to the freshness of the night. The night was very still, but she was not still. Her heart was going like the steam-engine she had once seen, in which something went up and down, up and down, with ceaseless clangour. This was like the sound that was in her ears, and her heart was beating and throbbing in sympathy. Of course, she said to herself angrily, she had known all along that he would not come. She had been sure that he never meant to come. Why should he come out of Edinburgh, where there was society and amusement, to such a quiet little place as

Wallyford? She might have known it was nonsense all along. Nobody minded, indoors or out. The garden breathed calmly in the dark, with all its soft fragrance, the scent of the roses and the sweet-brier, and the tall lilies which had all come out since the beginning of the week, and stood glimmering like white ladies here and there along the dim borders; and the father and mother thought of nothing but John. Papa even asked if *he* had come, not they—even papa, always so sympathetic, did not mind. Then Isabel shut her window almost violently, and threw herself upon her bed; but she did not sleep for two whole hours, which is a very long time for a girl of eighteen. She heard twelve strike, and then one o'clock. And this frightened her. Not to be undressed, not to be asleep at one o'clock in the morning, seemed like guilt to her inexperienced soul.

That morning there was a subdued air of trouble in the house. John was sulky, and his mother was sad, and even the old captain talked less cheerily, and looked at his son with an unfathomable tenderness and pity. The household life was constrained altogether. When they talked, it was with an effort. And it need not be said that this being the case, the quietness of the Sunday weighed doubly upon John, who was eager for self-forgetfulness and amusement, and could not endure being thus thrown back upon himself. He had to go back to Edinburgh, he announced, that evening; he had engagements, but he would not tell them what these engagements were, nor would he make any response to the imploring look in his mother's eyes. As for Captain Cameron, he did not say much. He laid his hand upon John's shoulder and said, "My poor boy!" patting him softly, and looking at him always with that compassionate, tender gaze.

"I don't know why you think me so poor," the young man cried. "Oh yes! I'm poor, poor enough; and it's a little hard to see others with plenty in their pockets, and I never a penny."

"It was not money I was thinking of, my lad," said the old captain. "As for money, you have always had every penny that your mother and I could spare; my dear, if he wants it, and you have it, give him something to keep his pocket."

"William, are you out of your senses?" cried the mother; "will you give money, and aye more money, to throw away?"

"My mother would like me never to have a penny in my pocket," said John indignantly; and then the captain showed a gleam of anger for the first time.

"Hold your peace, sir," he cried; "your mother is better to you, far better to you, than you deserve." But then he added, "We will never make him good by force, my dear. If he wants it, and you have it, do not leave him unprovided, that's my advice;" and then he laid his hand again on John's shoulder with a tender touch of his old fingers, and said again, "My poor lad!"

John stood between sullenness and tears, ready to be turned in a moment to one or the other—the water in his eyes, but the scowl on his brow—and who was to tell what touch would decide him to one or the other? His mother would have given her life for him freely, but she did not know, any more than any other human creature could, what was passing in the young man's mind, nor what to do to determine the wavering balance the right way. She was afraid to say anything, poor soul. But she shook her head, scarcely knowing that she did so, and that was enough. The scowl came over the whole house like a thunder-cloud, and though John carried away with him the money he wanted, and left the house as he wished on Sunday evening, getting his own will in everything, he carried his ill-humour with him. Isabel walked down the road with him, as was her wont, and his mother stood looking after him from the staircase window with an ache of speechless pain in her heart. But he did not turn round even with a smile, with a wave of his hand, as he shut the gate behind him.

"What a bear you are, John," his sister said, when they were out of hearing; "I wonder if you think it's grand to be sulky and disagreeable, you boys——"

"And I wonder if you think it's fine to be impertinent, and speak of things you don't understand," her brother retorted. Then he added, pleased to find an outlet for his inward wrath—which was chiefly with himself—it must be said, "I've something to say to you, Isabel."

"Say it then." Isabel turned to him after a long minute of silence, "Say it; but if it is only crossness and scolding——"

"I'll tell you what it is—no, I cannot tell you," he cried, "for whatever you may think of me, and however hard my mother may be upon me——"

"My mother is never hard upon you; oh, John, how dare you say that? when you heard what papa himself said, 'better to you, far better than you deserve.'"

"Papa's an old—— I've nothing to say against my father, oh, you needn't fire up; but they are old—they are past knowing what the like of us care about; my father's seventy-five, and I'm twenty-five. He's awfully kind, and I know all that about my mother letting herself be cut in pieces for me, and so forth. I don't want her to be cut in pieces for me. I want——"

"Oh, John, how dare you, how dare you! What do you want that you don't get? You are the one that has always been petted," cried Isabel, "more than any of the rest. If you heard what Marget says——"

"I would like to know what right Marget has to interfere—a servant—an old wife like the rest; I want to be understood," said John, "I want to be trusted. Am I always to be ruled like a copybook and kept in a string? That is my mother's way of thinking, and Marget's, and all women's. My father may know a little better," said the young man in a tone of grudging approbation. As for Isabel, she turned upon her brother, with her two small hands clenched in a girlish fury.

"I would like to shake you!" she said.

The joke of this restored him to partial good-humour. Whatever may be the storm of indignation in a girl's heart, the clenching of her small fist, so useless for any purpose of punishment, must always be amusing to a man. He gave a laugh and unbended slightly.

"It's all very well talking," he said, "and I don't want to quarrel; but they should understand a fellow, that is what I want. At my age, you can't sit still at the chimney-corner like them. You want to get your fling."

"Oh!" said Isabel, and then she added after a little pause, "when I am twenty-five, will I have my fling too?"

"You are just as great a fool as any of them," cried her brother angrily, "you! a girl wants nothing I know of but to stay quietly at home—the best place for her: and sew her seam," he added, beginning to laugh again, "and play the piano, and be content."

"I see," said Isabel, "it is only you that are to have your fling; is it a very nice thing, or a very bonny thing, John?"

Here he uttered some exclamation which Isabel was glad not to make out, and then he said hotly, "I'll tell you one thing, Bell. Mansfield is not to have *his* fling, if I can help it, at my sister's expense."

Then Isabel's look changed. She grew red, not blushing, but with a hot colour of indignation, then pale. "You have mentioned Mr. Mansfield's name two or three times already. What have I to do with Mr. Mansfield? You brought him once, papa asked him again. And," said Isabel, colouring high again, but this time not with anger, "he was not like you, he was not dull at Wallyford."

"No," cried John, "because he was thinking, 'Here is a pretty, silly bit of a country lass, and I'll make a conquest of her.' That is why he didn't find Wallyford dull, and that is why I would not bring him here last night. It was not his doing; he wanted to come, oh! you may be sure he wanted to come; but I gave him to understand," said the young fellow, glad perhaps because of

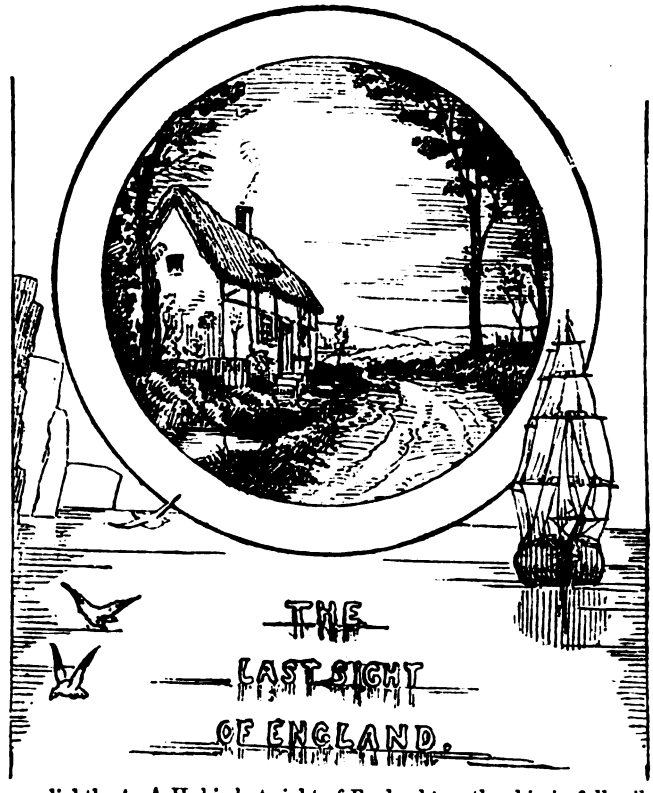
his self-humiliation about other matters, to dwell upon this, on which he could plume himself a little, "I gave him to understand that, though I liked him well enough in other places, I simply wouldn't have him here."

Isabel had time to go through a great many different feelings, while her brother made this long speech. She was angry first, then a relief that was like a delicious sensation of pleasure stole over her, and she heard no more of what John was saying in the new fact that he made so clear to her, "He wanted to come." She had been humbled in her own eyes because he did not come, because she had expected him and he had not justified her expectation; but now her disappointment, her mortification, all flew away like a mist. He had wanted to come. She forgave John what he said that was offensive, she forgot it even. Her heart, which had been so heavy, rose like a bird. She forgot the cloud that hung over the house. She had not understood it very clearly, and now she forgot it altogether. When she reached the turning of the road where she always left her brother, she stood and looked after him for a moment, but with nothing of the wistful look which had been in her mother's eyes. She watched him going along, young and active, with his light, quick step, swinging his stick in his hands, and now and then cutting down a thistle or a big dock leaf on the roadside—and did not wonder much that he liked to go to Edinburgh, and was just a little dull at home. Home will sometimes be dull, let one do what one will. Isabel's thoughts travelled with him as he went on lightly into the world. She was young too. She thought she would like to see the world too, and learn by her own experience whether it were full of trouble, as her parents sometimes said, or bright and delightful, as her fancy whispered. She sighed a little as she turned back; some of the brightness went out of the sky, the shadows of the trees were sombre, the evening beginning to close in with a chill in the skies. And she wondered a little whether the chill and the grayness must always be for the girls, while the boys go out and see the world. Perhaps, at the bottom of her heart, Isabel felt that she would like to have her "fling" too, though she did not know what it was.

Meanwhile, the old people sitting together were talking of John and thinking of him, not of Isabel at all. Perhaps they loved her best of all their children, but they felt to her as the father in the parable felt to that elder son who thought himself neglected when the prodigal came home. "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." There was no anxiety so far as Isabel was concerned, nothing but consolation, and pleasure, and sweetness; therefore they did not think of her, but gave all their anxious prayers and consideration to their boy who was in danger. Had they been told that their darling, in all her maiden innocence, was wavering perhaps at the corner of the wrong turning too, could they have believed it? Had any one told them so, he would have seemed to them as one that dreamt. She was as safe, they thought, as one of the angels in heaven.

To be continued.

HINT TO VISITORS OF INVALIDS—BY AN INVALID.—Never pay a long visit to invalids, however well they may appear. Ten minutes, or at most a quarter of an hour, is a refreshment; longer than that causes a strain for which they are quite unable, and the visit does a great deal more harm than good.—A. B. B., *in St. Bernard's Parish Magazine.*



AH, his last sight of England! as the ship in full sail
Glides past Dover pier in the moon set so pale:
Dover town is all sleeping, but a long curve of lights
Rounds the bay, 'neath the dark line of castle and heights.

And a dozen miles inland the sailor boy sees
The hop-garden, the cottage, the three hives of bees,
And the rose-covered lattice, behind which asleep—
Ah no! mothers sleep not; she is waking to weep.

"O mother, my mother," the sailor boy sighs,
And 'tis not the salt spray that's blinding his eyes;
"O mother, dear mother, I'll be brave, I'll be true,
I'll never forget the old cottage and you."

Not a bit of a coward is the sailor boy there;
His hand is a strong hand to do and to dare,
He can work like a Briton—fight too, if need be,
Yet his last sight of England is a sad sight to see.

And when he comes back after years four or five,
Finds the cottage still standing—the mother alive—
As the white Dover cliffs gleam afar on his lea,
Oh, the first sight of England is a good sight to see!

THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX GENTLEMAN."

THE PRAYER-MEETING.—A sympathetic audience is as sunshine to the preacher's heart, opening it out and giving power to his words; an unsympathetic one dulls, chills, freezes. If you want your minister to speak as you *need* him to speak at your prayer-meetings, give him a full attendance. If you want to lock him up, make his heart shut as the flowers do when the east winds blow, stay away; or, if you attend, look uninterested, or give a yawn! That will answer most effectively. Don't forget that even Moses could not long keep up his hands without the help of Aaron and Hur.—*St. Mark's (Dundee) Parish Magazine.*

WALLYFORD.

By Mrs. OLIPHANT.

CHAPTER V.

JOHN CAMERON was like a great many young men of his time. He was tolerably well educated, good-looking, well dressed, and acquainted with all that interested his generation. To look at him, to talk to him, there was nothing in him which was much different from those who were his social superiors, and who possessed that advantage of wealth which tells for so much at all times. He was only a clerk in an office, and yet he might have been a young duke, or the son of a Prime Minister. His father a poor navy captain, his home not much more than a cottage, he yet felt himself to belong to the grade of those who were the highest and the most honourable in the land. And so he was, so far as all that is best in that grade is concerned. If he had not the ease of high society, at least he had perfectly good manners, without vulgarity, and quite without pretensions. He was a gentleman, than which there is no higher title: a king himself can be no more. But if it may be said that what is good in itself is ever unfortunate for its possessors, it was unfortunate for John, as it is for many another youth, that there was no outward difference between him and the wealthiest or most highly placed. We can never nowadays establish over again the external marks of differing rank which once existed among us. Equality, in appearance at least, has become the rule. And John saw very little reason why he should not have everything that the others had, who were no better than he, and yet had unbounded leisure to do what they pleased, and money to pay for all their whims and pleasures. He had no money for anything beyond what was necessary—or at least the very smallest margin, "something in his pocket," and no more. He was a great deal worse off in this particular than his contemporaries in the rank of Robbie Baird. They were like each other, much the same in their means, one no richer, no more at ease than the other; and wherever they went they were each other's equals, a young fisher, a young working-man, being very much the same all the world over. The drawback in John's case was that he was exactly like everybody else who is called a gentleman, and gentlemen, as we have said, is the highest rank that exists anywhere. He looked as well, and he talked as well, as any young duke. But it is not necessary to go so far, for dukes are not plenty anywhere, though there is a very good supply of them in Scotland; and it is easier to say that he looked just as well, and possessed the same kind of manners, and the same kind of education as the officers, for instance, or any of the young landed gentry about Edinburgh: and the dreadful drawback was, that while this was the case, it was also the case that John was only a poor clerk, who had no money, and whose duty it was to be in the office all day long. He liked the same amusements that they liked; though there was this great difference between them—which he could not help thinking a hard case—that while they could indulge in their pleasures as much as they liked, he was bound to his desk, and had to be copying letters, and adding up dull accounts, while they were enjoying themselves. This was bad enough even when he only knew at a distance of their pleasures, but when this good-looking, well-mannered youth made the acquaintance of some members of the idle class of his contemporaries, and not only was conscious of their pleasures at a distance, but saw them close at hand, and saw the others trooping off to them, and was urged and entreated to join them, and laughed at for a humbug when he pleaded his duty, John felt his case harder still. He thought it was very hard—not that he blamed anybody, or believed that any one was to blame; but only it was hard to work while others were amusing themselves, hard to be poor while so many were rich. It was not the fault of his parents, for they, too, had been poor all their lives, and had taken very little amusement; and unless John had gone so far as to regret that he had ever been born, he could not grumble at them; but he was far from regretting that he had been born. He felt within him the greatest possible power of enjoying life, and a thirst for more and more enjoyment. When the sun shone in those bright summer mornings, it was hard work for him to keep still at his desk. He wanted to be away, to be in movement, to be walking through the fresh morning air like the others, enjoying the brightness, and his own strength and youth. And thousands more must have felt like John, save that some master themselves, and work all the harder, shutting their ears to the voice of the charmer; and some play with the temptation, and pause in their work, and let the pen hang idly in their fingers, or the book flutter its unclosed leaves while that voice steals into their hearts. A century ago or more, writers were fond of an allegory which was called the Choice of Hercules, and also by many other names. They were for ever telling the story of a young man who stood at the point where two roads joined, and was invited to follow them by two fair women, one of whom was Duty, and the other Pleasure. It is a formal, old-fashioned tale, which we have all read dozens of times in old books; but it is always happening over again, though we no longer make it into an allegory. He who chooses Duty has the best of it in the long run, and the other one, the foolish youth who takes Pleasure by the hand, knows well enough that he does it at his peril, and to his own harm. There is scarcely one who is so foolish as not to know this, that he does it to his own harm. We all deceive ourselves, but self-deception seldom goes so far as to ignore this. When a young man is foolish, when he goes away after his own follies, and leaves his work behind him, he knows that he will suffer for it. But the pleasure is at hand, and the suffering is a little farther off, and he takes the pleasure. This process has repeated itself ever since the world began.

And John Cameron knew it as well as any one; he was quite aware that, if he would do well, he should keep to his work early and late, and endeavour to take pleasure in it, and qualify himself for it more and more, and please his employers, and get a good name for himself. He knew that in no other way than this could he ever make any progress, or be better off, or a more considerable person than he was now. And he wanted very much to be a more considerable person; it never occurred to him as possible that he could remain just as he was all his life; of course, it was a necessity that he should "get on." But he knew very well that, living as he did now, he could never "get on;" and yet he wanted the one, and did the other. Could anything more foolish, more mad, be imagined? Yet there are hundreds, thousands—no man can count how many—who are doing exactly the same. I suppose he tried never to think of it at all, and when he was obliged to think of it, he called himself a fool and decided that to-morrow would make a difference. To-morrow is always such a resource! but people constantly forget that by the time it comes it has turned into to-day. When John walked into Edinburgh that Sunday evening with his mother's few pound notes in his pocket, he made a great many good resolutions. He had been very gloomy and ill-tempered at home, making things much worse, and giving his parents to suppose that, instead of being ashamed of himself, as he really was, he was angry with their interference and determined to take his own way. But in his heart he felt very differently. He thought that to-morrow would see him a new man, that he would certainly be at the office in good time, that he would listen to no temptations, that he would set his face like a flint, and turn a deaf ear to everything that could beguile him. These pound notes in his pocket made him more light of heart, and yet stung him with compunctions. He knew well enough that the money could be ill spared—the old folks' money, the little store that was set apart for some purpose—how could he tell

what purpose? Certainly it ought not to be used by him in any way that he would be ashamed to report to them. Of that John felt confident, shaking back his hair from his forehead with a half-indignant movement of his head, as he walked on and on towards the Edinburgh lights.

But next morning!—it was to-day then, no longer to-morrow—and, though he had still a lingering sense that the Sabbath evening should be otherwise occupied, he had spent a merry hour or two with some of his friends after he came back. Merry, John supposed when he got up with a little headache in the morning—noisy at all events; and some of the fellows certainly made fools of themselves, and he was not so early as he ought to have been. But still he was in time for the office and to keep his word. And, though it was a lovely morning, he turned his back upon it, and went steadily to his business. He cast a wistful glance at the big windows of the club, where several of his friends were wont to be visible as he passed, but it was too early for them; they, John reflected with a touch of bitterness, had no need to get up as he did by skreigh of day. Skreigh of day meant a little before nine o'clock; it was not so very early; but still it was with a wonderful sense of superiority that he sat down at his desk, the very first who had arrived. Mr. Scrimgeour himself was early that morning, and he gave a humph! of audible astonishment when he saw John. This early appearance gave him one or two unusual things to do. He had to take out the books from the safe, an office generally fulfilled by one of the elders.

"What's come of Johnston?" Mr. Scrimgeour said in his sharp voice; "the man must be ill, or something's the matter. Who ever saw him out of this office at five minutes to ten, or you in it?"

John was tempted to make some hasty reply, but he restrained himself. The French say that nothing succeeds like success, which may be roughly translated that nothing is so steady in well-doing as the superior virtue which has got up (for once in a way) before nine o'clock, and is the first at the office. And there was another thing he did that morning, which had a still greater effect upon him. Johnston, the cashier, being absent, John received a payment of money due to the firm, with, for the moment, a most gleeful consciousness of the unusual nature of the circumstance. He had to take Mr. Scrimgeour his letters the next moment, which the postman brought just then, bringing himself also sundry communications, which took down—the mere outside appearance of them—a great deal of John's glee. He thrust them into his desk, and the money with them, while he carried the letters to Mr. Scrimgeour's room. And just then the others, some detained by one circumstance, some by another, began to appear one by one, and John, as the early bird, was made the subject of much joking. It was his first appearance in that character, everybody said. He thought it went a little too far. He was not fond of being laughed at, even in an innocent way, and this kind of pleasantry is an edge tool. The jest was a reproach, and cut both ways. And the recollection of those blue envelopes, which he had thrust into his desk, haunted him, and made his temper less patient. He seemed to see them, and read them through the wood of the desk, and through the tough envelopes. He knew what would be in them—figures which he knew by heart, which he tried to forget, but could not, accompanied by threats which made him sick, yet which he pushed off from him, and would not think of. Generally he made no reply at all to these missives. What could he say? It would be as easy to him to put himself on a throne, to make himself the Prince of Wales, as to pay them; and what excuse had he to give that anybody would take? He could not say, In six months, in a year, I will pay you. He was not like those happier people who know they have something to "come in to," and who have some reason to ask a creditor to wait. John knew that he had nothing to come in to; he knew he had been mad to run up such bills, and he did not know where to turn, how to get the money, or half, or quarter part of the money. What did he think would come of it? He tried not to think at all. He did not open those terrible blue envelopes. What good could it do? One time or other the catastrophe would come, he could not prevent it, he could not even postpone it that he knew of; he was helpless. He felt his mother's pound notes in his pocket, and he was almost glad that they could be of no use to satisfy the harpies, as he called them, who were putting out their horrible claws to devour him. John had got, by degrees, to think himself an unfortunate victim of these harpies. He had not even taken the trouble to ask the price of many things which stood against him in these bills, but he felt sure they had charged him two or three times too much, and that they were harpies to be held off as long as possible. He pushed these communications away into his desk, and would not open them; but they took away all the pleasure of the morning, and that little glow of virtue which had made the day begin so pleasantly. Though he had not opened them, he knew they were there; there was no possibility of any mistake so far as they were concerned, and they spoiled his morning for him. When harpies of this kind have any hold on you, they fix their clutches in your flesh always at the least suitable moment, at the time when it will do you the most harm. Monday morning, the beginning of a new week, the turning over of a new leaf, when he was in such excellent time, and with such excellent dispositions! John felt that they spoiled his morning for him, and his work, and everything. He did not feel that there was any fault of his in it. He felt disposed to fling the book he was posting up out of the window, and throw the letters he had to copy in the face of the chief clerk who gave them to him. What would it matter? Sooner or later "a smash" must come. He knew very well it must come; and there is a despair which is of kin to folly, as well as that sombre despair which is woe. He had half a mind to put on his hat and go out into the delightful air and sunshine which was so bright, and see what those fellows were about. Most likely "a smash" would come in their case too, one time or other; but, in the meantime, they were not shut up in an office; they were enjoying themselves, they were taking their fling and getting the good of their life. As John went on writing languidly, making mistakes, and losing his time, not thinking what he was writing, he said to himself, that he had neither one thing nor another, neither the gaiety and enjoyment which were worth having, even at the cost of a smash, nor yet the self-denial which might do him some good at the end. He was only half and half, falling between two stools, getting the good of neither way. What if he were to dash off, and throw it all up, and take his fling, as he had said to Isabel, so that the smash might come and be got over, and everything come to an end? But, alas! his fling, John felt, could not go much farther than his poor mother's one-pound notes. So he went on languidly copying his letters, wishing they were at—Jericho, wherever that may be: and now and then looking longingly out, and listening to the pleasant hum of voices and noises from outside. All this time he had forgotten about the money which he had received the first thing in the morning, and which he had flung into his desk, along with those blue envelopes, in impatience and despite. It had gone out of his head altogether. If he had remembered, he would have given it over to Johnston, the cashier, as a matter of course, without a thought.

And unwilling as he was, and out of heart as he was, John kept at his desk all the morning. It would have been a great deal better for him if he had taken more interest in his work. It would have been more amusing for one thing, and he would have got on faster, instead of going wrong in his additions more than once, not from any failure of arithmetic, but because he could not fix

his mind to it. He felt this himself, and once more lamented vaguely over himself that he was falling between two stools. Why couldn't he be like Johnston, whose pride was in his books, and who would rather see them all in order, agreeing to a fraction, and with every entry looking like copperplate, than look on at the most exciting race, or contemplate the most beautiful landscape in the world? or like Mansfield, on the other hand, who had nothing to think of but his own pleasure, who went where he pleased, and spent as much money as he pleased, and did exactly what he thought proper? Ah, Mansfield! John resolved that he would not have him at Wallyford, but among men he was a nice fellow enough; and what a thing to be like that, to be able to do anything you pleased! That, or to be like Johnston, who took such pleasure in what he had to do. John sighed, and thought himself an ill-used man, ill-used by Providence, who had not given him the right dispositions for his fate, and as he sighed, he closed his book and got his hat, and went out to have his luncheon. In the most rigid of offices, to be sure, the young men must get hungry like other people, and must go out to lunch.

And how sweet the day was outside! and as he went out whistling softly with pleasure to be freed, he could not help feeling in his pocket his mother's poor little notes. They had been put into his hands with the very generosity of trust, far above common calculations. He had felt to the very bottom of his heart the words his father had said, "We will never make him good by force;" it is true that he had gone out of the house after that, keeping up an air of resentment; but in his heart he had felt them profoundly, and the tears had been in his eyes as he walked into Edinburgh, blurring the cheerful lights as he approached the town. But then that was last night, and this was to-day. And he did not mean to put them to any bad use; but since they were too few to pay anybody, to do any good with, what harm was there in getting a little pleasure out of them? No one wanted him to deny himself now and then an innocent pleasure. As he thus came out of the office, open to every temptation, and, in short, looking out for something or somebody to tempt him, a dogcart suddenly drew up with a great clang and tumult precisely in front of him. "Here's Cameron," cried some one, and he was hailed at once by two other voices. There was just one corner where another could perch, and they were all going somewhere, half a dozen miles off, where something was going on—something, what did it matter what?—one excuse was as good as another. "Jump up quick, we lunch there," his comrades cried. If John hesitated just long enough to have a second appeal made to him, and an adjuration to "Look sharp, or we shall miss the fun!" was that not enough to satisfy conscience? "I really oughtn't, you know; I ought to get back to the office in the afternoon," he said, as he jumped up behind. "Never mind, we'll be back in good time," the driver, who was no other than Mansfield, said consolingly. And perhaps he meant it; and perhaps John meant it too, and believed what his friend said. When one wishes to believe anything, it is astonishing how easily one can do it; and off the party went with a great deal of chatter and laughter; the horse went admirably, and it was a delicious day. And what harm was there in it? not even expense—to speak of: to be sure Johnston, the cashier, who had been very lenient, and looked over a great many similar absences, was compelled to speak to Mr. Scrimgeour on the subject; but nobody except John himself knew of those blue envelopes, and the money belonging to the firm, which was lying in the desk. The desk was not locked, and it was lying there quite openly and carelessly, so that anybody might see no harmful thought had as yet entered the poor young fellow's head.

Poor young fellow! Ah, how one's heart bleeds for him, though he was so much to blame! If there had been a deadly serpent coiled up in that desk, waiting to sting the poor boy when he next opened the lid, would it have been much more fatal? His young life seemed lying there along with the papers, a life already smirched and soiled, indeed, but hopeful still. There were the debts and ruin involved in them—ruin: but not such ruin as was in the fatal expedient which might stave it off a little, only to bring it home eventually with far more terrible, shameful force. There were the debts, the fruit of folly, and there was the money lying by which might pay them, but which was not John's. If only fire or earthquake, or any convulsion had come in the meantime, in the night, to burn up the place or throw it into ruin, where the elements of that moral destruction lay smouldering! You would have thought the old captain and his wife praying night and day, out of doors and in doors, waking and sleeping, would have moved the very elements to sweep away that temptation and save their boy. But if God were thus to act miraculously to save the sinning soul by force, there would be no longer any moral order, any justice, in the world. In the old heathen poets a god or a goddess steps in when a hero is in danger, and steals him away, and nobody calls coward; but in the Christian earth a man must be saved even by his weakness, by his follies, by the dreadful lesson, sometimes, of being left to himself. If God could be unhappy—and we know that love and pity can make Him grieve even in His blessedness, that is above the ken of man—I think it would be because of all those prayers that must not be answered, that cannot be answered, because no man can be made good by force, as the old Captain said. Could it be otherwise than a pain to the tender Father who loves us, to see these old people praying, and to refuse them? He sent no earthquake, no fire in the night. The evil lay there all unnoticed, all unsuspected by John or any one. And the poor foolish boy who had deserted his duty, and had forgotten all that had been said to him, and all that he had said to himself, got up next morning, feverish and wretched, scarcely fit to go to the office at all, wishing himself a hundred miles away, or at the bottom of the sea. Those notes which had given a warmth and ease to his bosom, though he could not pay his debts with them, were almost all gone, and in his mind was another bitter recollection of failure. He saw now that if Mansfield's dogcart had not passed just at that moment it would have been better for him, and cursed Mansfield and his dogcart in his heart. Why was he such an ass as to go? He thought it was all the fault of the others who had tempted him. He did not think that he had himself come out all agog for temptation, looking out for it, inviting it. He thought that but for that unfortunate accident, but for Mansfield and his friends passing at that moment, all would have been well, that he would have returned to the office and done his work, and spent a sober and a dutiful day. For some time he hesitated whether he would not send a note to the office to say that he was not well. It would have been true enough; his head was aching, a little from disorder of the body, and yet more from disorder of mind. But he did not do this: he went, late and irritable, and self-conscious, ready to take umbrage at a word. And Johnston spoke to him, telling that he had been obliged to speak to Mr. Scrimgeour about his irregularities, but was pacified, having a great kindness for the young fellow, by the sight of his wretched looks. "If you had sent word you were ill," said the kind man, "I would have understood. Why did you not send word you were ill? You are looking very bad, very bad. I don't like to see a young lad so pale. Go home and lie down on your bed, or keep quiet at least. I'll make it all right with Mr. Scrimgeour; but how was I to know you were ill, if you did not say? Go home and take a rest, and keep yourself very quiet, and you will be better to-morrow. That's my advice, Cameron. You are not looking like yourself to-day."

This was what Mrs. Cameron always said, "Not looking like yourself." It irritated John.

"I am all right," he said impatiently, "a little seedy, that's all. You need not put yourself to any trouble about me."

"Seedy," said good Mr. Johnston, shaking his head. "I never know what you lads mean when you say you're seedy. You should go home to your lodgings and lie down upon your bed. That would be my advice."

"Oh, confound your advice!" said John, under his breath, but he had so far possession of his senses that he did not allow this to be audible. He went back to his desk, and settled down to his work with an aching head and an aching heart. Before he left his lodgings something even worse than those blue envelopes which lay unopened in his desk had come to him: and his affairs were growing urgent. He leant his throbbing forehead in his hands, when he had opened the book with which he made so poor progress yesterday. What was he to do? It would not serve him now to push the envelopes out of sight or not to open them. He knew a "smash" must come, but the approach of it took away his breath. And if he could not find some way of providing for this necessity, surely all would now be over and the smash would come.

Good Johnston, the cashier, went straight into Mr. Scrimgeour's office. He said, "I find I've made a mistake and done an injustice to that poor laddie, John Cameron. I hope you'll pay no attention to what I said anent him yesterday. He's been ill, poor lad. He's come back this morning looking like a ghost. I'm very sorry to have given you a false impression; he's rather a—delicate young man."

This, I fear, was said on the spur of the moment, as the first excuse that occurred to the good man; for John Cameron was not delicate. Mr. Scrimgeour was made of much tougher stuff than his cashier. He cast a glance half of contempt at that kind soul. "No more delicate than I am, Johnston. You let yourself be wheedled and humbugged on all sides. He! Far more likely he has been dissipating last night."

"No, no, not that," said the merciful man; "I never saw any signs of that. When they do that, you can always see at a glance. But he's a ruddy, fresh-complexioned lad, and always spruce and well-put-on."

"I thought you said he was delicate."

This made the excellent cashier blush a little. "It is well known," he said, with great seriousness, "that some kinds of complaints go with a fine complexion. So that a good colour is not always a sign of good health; but he's not ruddy to-day. I think we should send him home to take care of himself. I have a great respect for his father and mother."

"And so have I, or that silly fellow would not be here to-day," said the head of the office. "Well, well, since you insist, I'll say nothing about it this time; but give him a warning, Johnston; it must not happen again."

With this, Johnston stepped back again into the office. "It's all right, it's all right, John, my man; nothing will be said; but Mr. Scrimgeour was very particular I should tell you, when you are feeling poorly, always to send me a line. Just a line, that it will take you no trouble to write, and then there can be no mistake. But I hope you mean to take my advice. Leave that to me, I'll manage it for you; and go you home to your lodgings, and lie down on your bed, and keep yourself quiet. If you do that, you'll soon be well."

"I want nothing but to be let alone," said John; "I'm all right. I can do my work as well as usual, if you'll make them let me alone."

Thus John shut upon himself the little door of escape which Providence had offered. Had the boon of a day's holiday been in his power on almost any other occasion, he would have jumped at it; but partly because he was so irritable, partly because, in his excitement and despair, he could not keep quiet, but was glad of the hum of voices in his ears, and something mechanical to do, he rejected the freedom thus pressed upon him. He would not go away. He got to his work furiously, and with not much more aptitude for figures, it may be supposed, than he had shown on the previous day; and then he stopped and resumed his still more favourite thinking. What was he to do? He was ill, he was wretched, all his faculties were confused. When the others went out for their luncheon, he, who had no appetite, stayed behind, still pondering, thinking, asking himself what he was to do. What was he to do? There was a singing in his ears, his heart beat in his throat. Mechanically he lifted the lid of his desk to look for something, he scarcely knew what. And there—lying by the unopened letters, all in one heap, what was it?—salvation, damnation, he could not tell which. He retreated from the first thought as if it had been the Evil one in person whom he saw, and shut down the desk, and got up and walked to the farthest end of the office quickly, as if to get away from it. He was as pale as death, and a heavy perspiration covered his forehead. But then, after a little interval, John went back and opened the desk once more.

To be continued.

Wavering.

OFT have I marked, with wondering eye,
The swift-winged swallows as they fly
Skimming the dark lake o'er,
Flutter midway as drooping quite,
Like spirits brooding o'er the night,
Then rise, and wing a nobler flight,
Far o'er the waters, to alight
Safe on the sheltering shore.

Oft have I seen the morning sun,
Ere yet his journey is begun,
And daybreak hovers nigh,
Lazily o'er yon sea line peep,
Half conscious, as new raised from sleep,
Then rouse himself, and, vigorous, leap,
Sheer from the bosom of the deep,
Into the glowing sky.

So may you find, in life's brief day,
The Christian, weary of the way,—
He droops, and almost dies!—
'Tis but a moment: ere the foe,
Exulting, strikes him drooping low,
Sudden new vigour's healthful glow
Mantles his cheek; and now, behold!
With strength renewed, nervons and bold,
With courage firmer than of old,
He presses towards the prize.

O God! when comes that lonely hour,
When I must feel the tempter's power,
Steal o'er my senses, as the snow
Steals through the dark, till earth below
Is bound in chains of white;—
Help me with Thine all-powerful arm,
Let me resist the enticing charm;
O grant me courage then to flee,
In panting strength, unfettered, free,
To Thee alone, and thus to be
Victorious in the fight.

W. D. L.

GIVING TO GOD.—True giving, which God promises to return with interest here and hereafter, is not so much giving what one can spare, as making some sacrifice to be able to give. David says (1 Kings xxiv. 24), "I will not offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing."—*St. Paul's (Perth) Parish Magazine.*

WALLYFORD.

By Mrs. Oliphant.

Chapter VI.

MEANWHILE the family at home knew nothing and suspected nothing of what was happening; and the summer went on full of incidents to Isabel. Though John had given him fairly to understand that he did not want him at Wallyford, Mansfield found many means of making himself agreeable there. He let them know, good-humouredly, that he was aware his visits were not agreeable to their son and brother. "And I don't wonder," he said, laughing; "if I had a Garden of Eden all to myself, I should like to keep it to myself. I should warn other fellows off, and think nobody was worthy—especially fellows such as I am. I am not worthy, Mrs. Cameron. I have always confessed it: but if you will open the door to me, I may come, may not I, in spite of John?"

"You must have mistaken him, Mr. Mansfield; hoot! you must have mistaken him," Mrs. Cameron said, blushing for her son. She could not endure that such a stain upon the hospitality of the house should be; and the stranger's candour vindicated him completely in her eyes. She thought she knew the world. "And lads that have much on their consciences are not so ready to take blame to themselves," she said, nodding her head with a confident consciousness that to deceive her in such matters would not be an easy task. She did not understand how easy it is to take a vague and general blame upon one's self, and to acknowledge a general unworthiness. And neither was the Captain more clear-sighted. He consented over and over again to be taken on the water in Mansfield's little pleasure-boat. Even one glorious day in early August he and Isabel went as far as Inchkeith in this cockleshell, and lunched there with the delighted young man. And after these expeditions the three would walk back to Wallyford together, and there would be the merriest meal, and a night of talk such as "loosed the tongue," Marget said, "in the auld captain's head." There are some young men who, when they are in love, make themselves disagreeable to everybody except the one person who is the object of their love-making—but there is another kind of man who sees all the surroundings of his love in the rosiest colours, and woos the very dogs and the gruffest old servant for her sweet sake. Mansfield was of this kind. He made love to them all, and won their hearts. Marget, though she still now and then lamented that she did not "ken mair aboot him," expanded into smiles when she heard his voice. The Captain would take off his spectacles, and clear his throat with a brightening up of his old countenance as he said, "There's that lad again!" and Mrs. Cameron, though she had begun to think of him with quickened attention and much curiosity, and lost no opportunity of sounding him as to his antecedents and his "friends"—meaning his relations and family—smiled too, and had a look of welcome, which was quite individual, for him, and no one else. At the pier it was the same. There was nothing old Sandy would not have done for the cheery, friendly young man. He took care of the boat as if it had been a child of his own; and when he had nothing else to do, would polish and scrub her till the little vessel shone. "Hoot, sir, it's no money I'm wanting," he said, when that never unacceptable transfer was made from one pocket to the other. "I'm no wanting his money," the old man said to his cronies, "but it's aye pleasant to see a lad like that with a free hand, and thinking upon other people's pleasure as well as his own." Thus everybody was in his favour, both great and small.

July, August. What months they were! Most persons are aware, by personal experience, sooner or later, how some little bit of time, a month or two, a week or two, will suddenly come to bloom out like a great and perfect blossom upon their lives. Out of the flat routine of ordinary existence—the days that run on exactly like each other, of which common existence is made—all at once this crown of living will come, full of pleasure, full of happiness, usually full of some one individual whose presence gives everything a charm. Then those who had sighed for wealth, or elevation, or something out of their reach, will suddenly become content with the homeliest life. They will find out that externals do not make happiness, that the walk which they have taken, without thinking of it, all their lives, has somehow become a delight, and the fireside conversation, which they have felt to be humdrum, has suddenly gained something which is more than eloquence. Sometimes this wonderful flooding of all the veins of life stops all at once as it began, and existence halts off again, unchanged, into the monotonous thing it was before: sometimes life itself is permanently changed, and diverted into a new channel; but anyhow, that bright moment ends, and the common strain takes up again one way or other. Isabel had come to this moment now. Except those little expeditions on the water now and then—not a dozen of them altogether—spread over the two months, no new gratification had been added to her; and yet everything was changed. She lived a very quiet life for a girl of her age; and it was not any amusement added, any excitement, going into society, going to parties, anything which she had once looked forward to, which brought about this wonderful change. The modest little plant had been coming up, putting out its leaflets all this long, sweet spring, and showing its buds of promise—and now, all at once, it burst into flower. And this transformation affected all around her; the household, which was never sure any evening that the stranger who had established his right to a place among them so securely, might not come in to share their evening meal, and fill the dim rooms with the sweetness of youthful talk and the mirthfulness of youthful laughter, enjoyed, as well as Isabel, this general flooding of new life. The half of the time at least had passed before any one began to think what it meant. As was natural, the mother was the first to be awakened. She had treated John's jealousy of Mansfield's reception at Wallyford as a little exhibition of ill-humour, an evidence of that dislike to have their home invaded which is not uncommon among young men. Among all her anxieties for John this was so very small a matter; and the accidental character of his friend's visits had kept her mind quite calm and quiescent for a time. But, after a while, Mrs. Cameron could not shut her eyes any longer. She said nothing, as yet, to her husband, but she began to watch with a quickened attention, which was, in itself, a kind of relief from her profound anxiety about John, the words and the ways and the looks of young Mansfield. And he bore the inspection, she thought. He was always gay, genial, and kind, yet ready to respond to a more serious touch, and to any call of charity, to any tenderer sympathy. She thought he divined her anxiety about her son, and took the trouble to interest himself in her feelings as well as in her daughter's. With a faint, unusual touch of humour, she said to herself, "The lad is in love with me, too," and laughed within herself with a sweet, tender laughter, which brought the tears to her eyes. When a mother thinks thus, you may be sure she has little alarm as to the candidate for her child's favour. He had touched her heart, he had established between his youth and her age that sympathy which age is flattered and made happy to be called upon to give to youth. She turned a deaf ear to the insinuations of Marget, who was more and more anxious, as affairs progressed, "to ken mair of" the constant visitor. In ordinary cases Mrs. Cameron was the one in the house most slow to extend her approval to a newcomer, but, in this case, she was the least doubting, the most certain. "What more could ye wish to know?" she said, with almost stern reproof, to her faithful servant. "We

know *him*." Marget, though she was, as she said, "real partial" to Mr. Mansfield, went back to her kitchen on this occasion with a bewildered sense that the mistress was "jist bewitched."

"*Do* we ken him? that's just what I want some assurance o'," she said to her husband.

"He's a pleasant lad," said Simon, who took everything quietly; and this was all the satisfaction she got. And so the weeks ran on, making him more and more familiar in the house, and more and more the source of all the increased brightness of its life.

And there seemed a lull, too, in those anxieties that had been so keenly awakened about John. He was sometimes so serious as to give them a momentary thrill of alarm about his health or his happiness; but his mother thought she could trace in his more regular visits and his demeanour, so much more "like himself," the influence of the friend who had become a friend of the family, and understood them, she felt sure, better than John himself did. Very rarely did the two appear together at Wallyford, but all hostility on John's part seemed to have dropped, and in all Mansfield's allusions to her son, John bore an aspect so irreproachable that it was impossible not to be consoled and encouraged by it. And thus everything went well. It was so easy to content these good people. If John was but "like himself," if he bore without impatience the ordeal of the Sunday visit, they were satisfied. An anxious word of counsel now and then, an anxious look, not obtrusive, given rather by stealth, when his attention was not directed to them, was all the evidence they gave of the state of alarm in which their minds were. They watched, but silently, not anxious to find out, anxious rather not to find out, praying perpetually, but saying little even to each other. They did as Job did. If it might be now that we could offer burnt sacrifices for our children, one for each, like that patriarch, to atone for the harm they might be doing, how many altars would smoke! Captain Cameron and his wife tried to help their boy in this way, with the difference which Christianity makes; they could not offer lamb or bullock for John, but they prayed for him perpetually. There are some orders of religious people in Roman Catholic countries whose rule it is to maintain what they call the Perpetual Adoration. In their houses there is always one at least in the little chapel praying, and when she (I think they are all women) is worn out, her place is taken by another, so that day and night there is always some one worshipping, pleading with God through all the weary, lingering hours, through cold and heat, through light and darkness. They do it, they say, to keep up continual prayer for those who do not pray for themselves, of whom there are so many in this world. The old father and mother at Wallyford were like this. I think they prayed in their sleep, and woke up often with that petition on their lips, and were never silent, night nor day.

And so the summer went on, all so quiet, so bright. The countryside, and the parish, and the Fisherstown began to take a great interest in Mansfield, and there were various people who inquired of Mrs. Cameron concerning him, more than she was able to answer. "You'll ken his folk?" one questioner said; while another would congratulate Isabel's mother "that there could be no want of means," yet doubt whether it was good for a young man to live for nothing but pleasure. The minister himself, perhaps moved by a little absurd jealousy on his son's account (though he himself had sent his son away in order to separate him from Isabel), made a remark upon this point. "He seems a fine lad," said Mr. Bruce, "but an occupation is good for every man."

"He is a fine lad," said Mrs. Cameron, "but I know nothing about his worldly affairs; he is just a friend of our John's." And at this the minister raised his eyebrows as if in surprise. These suggestions at last began to alarm her a little—suggestions that she ought to know a great deal more about her visitor. The neighbours with their questions made her see the importance of the matter. She began to look at Isabel with anxious curiosity, and to watch the ways and looks of the young man. It had never occurred to her that any kind of harm could happen to her girl. Harm! it was not possible, for the young stranger was true and honest. Who could look into his eyes and doubt that? But yet she began to give a somewhat anxious attention to all that was said and done. And so the summer went on.

Robbie Baird had been away at the fishing. All this time of Isabel's climax and happiness he had been absent, struggling with the herrings, earning something to make up for the days in winter when there would be little to earn. There had been no fresh encounter between him and Isabel after that momentous time when her indignation had carried her beyond bounds, and she had "spoken to" Robbie. Isabel never quite knew how she had found courage to do it, and, for some time, she was shy of meeting Jeanie Young, who was the only dressmaker who ever came to Wallyford. But when Jeanie came to work, and Isabel, after the usual custom of the house, sat down to help in the making of her own gown, under Jeanie's direction, it was not possible to avoid the subject. The little sitting-room downstairs, close to the door, for which there was no particular use, and which had very little furniture, was the workroom when dressmaking was in hand. Its single window looked out into the white rose-bush, which overshadowed it like a miniature forest, and the light was always cool and green in this subdued place, even in the very blaze of summer. It was a day in August, as hot as it ever is in Scotland, a brilliant sun shining outside, and a soft little breeze keeping up a rustling among the tree-tops, and bowing the nodding heads of the ripening corn, which on one side surrounded Wallyford, just outside its little shrubbery, with a sea of russet gold. The window was open, and sometimes the sportive wind would make a raid upon the large table where Jeanie was cutting out, and scatter bits of muslin and thread about the room. Jeanie had spoken very little that morning, which was all the more wonderful that she had by nature a sweet little low-toned voice, with a faint sing-song cadence, as so many voices have in Scotland, and loved to use it, singing softly to herself when she was not talking. Isabel had made two or three efforts to break the unusual ice, when it suddenly dawned upon her that Jeanie, no doubt, was displeased by her intervention in the matter of Robbie, and meant thus to punish her for meddling. This made a still longer and more complete silence between them. Jeanie, with a little languor in her pretty figure, stood at the big table arranging her patterns, and contriving how to spare her material, smoothing it out, patting and humouring it with an experienced hand, yet drooping her head over it with a want of elasticity and spirit which went to the heart of the other girl, who sat sewing at the window, and casting furtive glances at her companion. At length, "Are you not well, Jeanie?" Isabel said.

"Oh yes, Miss Eesabell. I'm much obliged to ye."

"You have been sitting up working, and you are tired, Jeanie?"

"Oh no, Miss Eesabell." Isabel's heart was very soft towards the girl, who was only a little older than herself, and in whom, somehow, she could scarcely tell how, she felt so much more sympathy than she had ever done before. She was not to be repelled by all those monosyllables.

"Jeanie," she said, "there is something wrong. What have I done? Is it all because of Robbie Baird that you will not speak to me?"

"Oh no, Miss Eesabell," Jeanie said, her breast fluttering with a heavy sigh. "Should I be angry at that?" she said, "oh no—it was a' for his good and mine. You're awfu' young to put in your hand and speak to a muckle man that laughs at the very minister;

but he wasna angry, he said you had a fine spirit. He's no' a lad to tak' offence, Miss Eesabell."

"But you have taken offence for him, Jeanie?"

"No me," said the girl drearily, "no me. Oh ay, many's the time I've stucken up for him and took his pairt: and they a' tell me I'm just a fool for my pains. It's no offence, Miss Eesabell, it's just that he's coming back the morn, and I canna tell what to do."

Isabel was very curious, very anxious. She let her work drop in her lap, and turned her face full of sympathetic interest towards the other. "Is it all about—the same thing, Jeanie?" she said.

"That and waur," Jeanie replied, with another long sigh, and stooping over her work, began to run her scissors through the cloth, glad to escape from this investigation; but after a while her own trouble broke through her self-restraint,—"that and waur," she repeated with a melancholy cadence. "I shouldna breathe it to the like of you. It's that ill woman Jess Morrison in the Fisherstown that says—oh I shouldna name the like o' that to you!"

And then there was a pause of dismay and horror. Isabel had been carefully guarded from all the scandalous stories that are too common in Scotch villages, but, little as she knew, she could not help knowing that to associate the name of Jeanie's betrothed husband with that of Jess Morrison could mean nothing but grievous harm. She stopped and held her breath with a pang of pity, and then of hot, youthful resentment. "Jeanie," she cried, with a sudden impulse, "that Sunday, you mind that Sunday! you said all was over between him and you."

"I've said it mair times than that, Miss Eesabell."

"But you don't keep to it, Jeanie. Oh, why don't you keep to it? He is not good enough for you."

"It's awfu' easy speaking," said poor Jeanie, shaking her head; "it's easy, easy speaking; but when it's your laud that you've thought about maist a' your life, when it's him that's first thought upon you, and learned you what it was to leave your faither and your mother, and think a' the world of a wee house o' your ain; when it's *him*, Miss Eesabell, that was the first in a' the airth, better than a king, that was to be by your side at kirk and market, and haud your hand if it was for life, if it was for death; when it's him," cried the poor girl, clasping her hands, "the one, the only one, that was your ain; the one that aye kent what you meant, every word ye said!"

Isabel looked at her humble friend with glistening eyes, and a great ache of fellow-feeling in her heart; her soft countenance crimsoned over, her heart began to beat. What was it that stole from her all power of protest, all the fervour of indignation with which she had once encouraged Jeanie to detach herself from her lover? Isabel felt her tongue tied. She could cry with her companion, but she could not say a word.

"And if you gang to the Bible itself," said Jeanie, drying her eyes, "it's written there that you're aye to forgive."

Isabel could not but shake her head. "Is that the same thing?" she said.

"Are there twa ways of forgiving, Miss Eesabel? I canna think there are twa ways. Man or woman, when they've gane wrang, if they say they're sorry for it, ye have to forgive them. That was the way I was learned at the school. There could not be twa ways of that," Jeanie cried, lifting her head in return with indignant certainty. She had been full of painful doubt when she began to speak. She was hot with determination now.

"But that did not mean to be married to them," Isabel said; and then something of her old sentiment returned to her. "He was not at the kirk at all that day, nor fit to go. You would have to go alone, Jeanie, and what would you get in the market if your man threw all his money away? and how could you think him the first on the earth if you saw him often like *yon*? There are plenty in the Fisherstown to show you how it would be. I saw Jamie Little's wife yesterday, crying, with all her bairns round her. He was away, and she did not know where he was gone—and David Begbie——"

"Miss Eesabell!" said Jeanie, starting up with a blaze of resentment, "you're speaking o' twa sots that have broken women's hearts, and made their hooses miserable; and me, I'm speaking o' my Robbie, that whiles takes a glass, poor laud, as they a' do, but that wouldna hairm a worm—no, he wouldna pit his fit on a worm—and do you think he would break my heart? That's just like a' the rest of you good folk. Because a laud's no just perfect, you think he's waur than words can say."

"O Jeanie, do not be angry," said Isabel, with eager compunction; "often, often, he has been here when the boys were at home; and it makes my heart sore, for I liked Robbie too."

"A'body likes him," cried poor Jeanie; "no a creature but wishes him weel. The bairns a' rin after him wherever he goes, and the puir folk, and the dumb beasts. Is a laud an ill laud when he's like that? Na, na, you'll never make me think it, you'll never make me believe it," the poor girl cried. And then she added, wringing her hands, "Miss Eesabell, Miss Eesabell, if you were in my place, what would you do?"

What could Isabel say? Her young soul quailed before such a question. If she were in Jeanie's place, what would she do? Give up her love and her life, and turn her back upon *him* and all her hopes and happiness because he was going a little, just a little, astray? She was confounded by the question. Would not that be like the Pharisee condemning his neighbour, or like the priest and the Levite passing by upon the other side? She gazed at Jeanie, with her soft eyes opening wide, her lips apart, her heart melting and bleeding for the sufferer, whom, for the first time, she could understand. "It's easy, easy speaking," poor Jeanie said: and the other girl could but look at her appalled, and could make no answer. The difficulty was one beyond her powers.

"If it was you," said Jeanie—she saw the effect she had produced, and she followed it up, anxious, poor girl, not to be advised for her good, which so many people were ready to do, but to pursue another into the same strait in which she herself was, and get support for her soul from a weakness like her own. "If you were me, Miss Eesabell, and yon grand young gentleman, wi' his winning ways, was like poor Robbie,—a' the parish at him, and a' your freends, and naebody for him but yoursel'—would you be the lass to say, 'He would maybe make me an ill man?—he would maybe even be ill to me when he wasna himsel'. He wouldna be steady enough, nor work hard enough to keep me aye comfortable?' You'll no tell me that you would say that, Miss Eesabell!"

"There is no question about me, Jeanie," said Isabel with trembling lips; "there is no gentleman—I think it would break my heart."

"And so it will mine," said Jeanie, returning to her work with a heavy sigh.

When Mrs. Cameron came in to join them some time later, the girls were working together very quietly. They were not talking as they usually did. The work was getting on with great rapidity, Jeanie's needle flying through the long seams. She had finished her cutting out, and the excitement in her mind was finding a kind of outlet in that rapid work. As for Isabel, she, on the contrary, was making very slow progress, stumbling with tremulous fingers over the piece of work in her hand. Her mind was in a great commotion of sympathy, and pain, and pity. She had not thought before of the difficulties of the problem which now seemed to look her in the face. She had thought there could be no question as to what a girl should do. Jeanie was far too good for her fisherman lover, and for such a girl to tie herself to a man who spent the Saturday night in riot and the Sunday in sleep, and of whom there was other scandalous gossip about, had seemed impossible. Even her maidenly pride,

if nothing else, would separate her from such a man. Isabel had spoken out of the fulness of her heart, when she had warned Robbie that he would disgust as well as grieve the girl who loved him. But here was another side of the case, which had not entered into her thoughts—"a' the parish at him, and a' your freends, and naebody for him but yoursel'." Isabel's heart stood still as the words repeated themselves in her ears. Supposing there was one who had everybody against him, and nobody but herself on his side, would she turn away from him? Would she abandon him, and leave him to his enemies? There stole before her, involuntarily, against her will, a vision of another, who was not Robbie. If all the world turned against him, what would Isabel do? Her heart swelled within her, her young bosom heaved, her eyes filled with great tears. What were those other words that seemed to rise within her, penetrating her whole being? They were words that were not spoken to a man, guilty of all he could be charged with, but to One who was above all the faults of man, yet tried by more than mortal anguish. The emotion with which they filled her innocent mind was confused by a sense of irreverence in the use of a pledge so sacred, "If all men forsake thee, yet will not I." This was the thought that went through and through her as she sat, her eyes blinded with two great oceans of dew in them, her fingers stumbling over her work. She did not dare to lift her eyes when her mother came in, lest these tears should fall. And how calm Mrs. Cameron looked in her age and her tranquillity to the girls on each side of her, one of them fighting with the worst difficulties of a woman's lot, torn in two between the clinging of faithful love and the dictates of her better judgment; between her mind, which condemned, and her heart, which could not relinquish; and the other in a strange agitation and tumult of feeling, conscious that she would not hesitate in such a case, yet trembling with a sweet and secret joy in the thought that no such choice could ever be put before her; that he was far too kind, too true, too spotless, to want such support! And when, after a moment, both the girls looked up at the old lady as she came in in her quietness, it was with a feeling that was half envy and half pity. Ah! that was all over, long over, for her. She knew nothing about it, perhaps she never had known anything about it, for the good old Captain never could have been anything but good. How easy life must be, Jeanie thought, to those who have nothing belonging to them but good folk, wise folk, steady, and sober, and faithful! It was true that some of the sons had been wild, but the young creatures could not feel that such a trouble as that equalled their own.

"I see you're getting on, Jeanie," said Mrs. Cameron; "you have a quick hand, my dear, and I hope Isabel is a help. So that is the new fashion. Oh yes, the new fashion is always liked, as you say; but I'm old, and I think the old ones were better. In my time we had bonnets that covered our heads, well tied down over the ears to keep you from getting cold. You may laugh, Isabel, but they were very comfortable, more comfortable than these bit fly-away things now."

"If the fashions didna change, the like of us would get little work, mem," said Jeanie; "nae fashion lasts, they say, above a month or two. It must be awfu' expensive when you follow them close."

"A pure waste of money," cried Mrs. Cameron, with energy. "I hope no bairn of mine would ever do that. Eh, but there are some things that do not change. I cannot tell what makes me think upon your mother, Jeanie."

Jeanie raised her head with a look of anxious eagerness. "She was ane," she said, "that hadna much good o' her life."

"What makes you think that, my woman? She died young. Them that die young are not aye to be lamented. She was taken away from the evil to come. I mind her a bonnie young thing, not unlike yourself; and your poor father, my dear, if he was maybe careless, it was not in her time—no, never in her time," said Mrs. Cameron, shaking her head; "as long as he had her by his side all was well."

"Eh, mem," cried Jeanie again, a gleam of light coming into her eyes, "do you think that's true?"

"I am sure it's true," said the kind mother with a smile. "She was soon, soon taken away, but, poor thing, while she lived all was well. Many a man," said Mrs. Cameron, shaking her head again, "is driven distracted when he loses his wife. It's a terrible misfortune for a working man. We must not judge our neighbours, far less you your father, Jeanie. As long as he had her by his side all was well. When there's no home to come in to, and no cheerful face at the fireside, and nobody to care for his bits of wants—oh, my good lassie, there are great excuses for a man."

Jeanie listened with a rapt attention which Mrs. Cameron did not understand, while Isabel, behind her mother, gazed too, with her heart in her wistful eyes. When Mrs. Cameron stopped speaking, there was a little breathless pause. The girls both put an interpretation upon her words which they scarcely bore. Jeanie broke the silence with something like a sob bursting from her anxious heart. "Eh!" she said, "a woman would have an awfu' burden upon her that wouldna put out a hand, if that's true, to them that's waverin' and like to fa'."

Mrs. Cameron's thoughts were directed in a very different channel. "My woman," she said, in her soft, motherly voice, with a tone in it that told of many a pang, "aye put out your hand to them that are like to fall. You never know when you may save a soul."

"I will, I will!" cried poor Jeanie; "and oh, mem, the Lord bless you for what you've said to me this day."

"It's but little to be thankful for," Mrs. Cameron said, with gentle surprise. She did not understand the agitation in the young dressmaker's face, but her heart was touched by the girl's troubled looks, and by the thrill of excited feeling that seemed to be in the air, though she did not understand what it was. She stood by the table for a few minutes longer, and talked about more ordinary matters, laying her hand kindly upon the girl's shoulder, and patting it as she spoke. That what she had just said should have been accepted as a guidance from heaven by either of the young creatures who were looking up to her would have surprised her beyond measure. What had she said that was not the merest duty of every Christian? And, after a while, she went out of the room again, quite unconscious of any crisis that had been gone through, or anxious decision made.

For some time after they both sat silent; the little rustle of their work, the snip of the scissors, the movement of their arms as they plied their needles, being the only sounds audible. Now and then Jeanie put up her hand furtively, to get rid of the tear that still lingered about her eyelashes; her high excitement and agitation had been soothed, and a soft sensation of mingled exhaustion and consolation was in her. When grief or anxiety comes to an outburst, the exhaustion after has a sweetness in it of relief. The worst of her trouble seemed to have been thrown off in her narration of it to Isabel, and the gleam of unintentional light which Mrs. Cameron had flashed upon her path, as from a lantern, showing, alas! in her ignorance, what was really the wrong turning, gave Jeanie a strange elation, as if she had gained something. She felt like one of those who, in ancient heathen times, consulted an oracle, and got back a doubtful, mystic answer, which they were fain to interpret to their own purpose. It seemed to Jeanie that nothing could be more clear. If she had asked advice, probably she would have got nothing but injunctions to be careful, but here, she thought, was something like the voice of a prophet, almost a revelation of heaven, telling her what to do: and, as it was what Jeanie wanted to do, you may suppose that she satisfied herself all the more easily. And Isabel's mind was greatly moved too. It

seemed to her at first that her mother had been inspired, that this was one of the same kind of unconscious utterances which the prophets made without knowing what was the meaning of what they said. But afterwards a little chill doubt crept over Isabel. She wondered what, if the question had been put to her mother in so many words, she would have said, and a secret ache of alarm awoke in her. After a long interval she spoke timidly, with a deprecating tone. "Oh, Jeanie," she said, "I think my mother did not mean *that*. I think she did not understand." Jeanie looked at her with a smile. The cloud had rolled away from her face, but her eyes were tearful, and her lips had still a quiver of past weeping in them.

"Miss Eesabell," she said, "it was the Lord that put it into the mistress's head; whatever you may think that are not in trouble, to me it was a voice from heaven." *To be continued.*

Recent Oriental Explorations.

By Rev. R. Jamieson, D.D., Glasgow.

No. I.

NO intelligent Christian, we think, can fail to recognise the hand of a presiding Providence in directing the lines of research which in our day have been opened up, and so perseveringly pursued, through all the lands of the Bible. In an age when a host of Rationalists have laboured by their wild fancies to impugn the Scripture History as a collection of legendary tales and popular traditions; and when a settled scepticism, generated by the influence of a materialistic philosophy, has rejected the idea of a revelation as the mere offspring of ignorance and weak superstition, it is marvellous to find to what a large extent the wisdom and goodness of God have furnished materials to overthrow the Babel of "the Higher Criticism," and to cover infidelity with silence and shame. The quarter whence these materials have been chiefly derived are the countries in which the successive parts of the sacred story were enacted. It is not now, as in former times, when some casual travellers, fired with the desire of visiting the birthplace of our holy faith, made a cursory tour through Palestine and Egypt, and, recording their impressions as they went along, supplied us with the only means of information we possessed of those lands in the East. Those travellers were, in many instances, unprepared by previous study to make reliable observations on the condition and manners of people so very different from the nations of Western Europe; and though increased and increasing numbers of educated tourists are every season going thither, who are fully able to reap all the advantages of such a journey, their different powers of observation, their varying tastes and opportunities of intercourse with the natives, always leave some things unnoticed and undescribed. Happily, in recent times, associations have been organised under the highest patronage, and supported by a sufficient amount of influence and resources to obtain a *firman* from the Turkish authorities for exploring Palestine and other Bible lands in a systematic manner. Definite plans of operations have been determined upon; lists of objects to be sought for, and of localities to be specially examined, have been drawn up; and persons competently skilled in Oriental languages, as well as in natural science, have been employed as leaders of exploring parties, who, furnished with all the requisite appliances of art for accurate measurement, have gone out for months, or it may be years, to make minute investigation into everything relating to the geography, climate, productions, and natural history of those countries. The exploration was designed to be thorough and exhaustive. Some of these undertakings have been already completed, and although others are as yet only in progress, we rejoice to be able to say that they have been, and will be still more, productive of the most valuable results, in attesting the truthful character and contents of the Sacred History. There is scarcely a single portion of the Scriptures which has not been most strikingly illustrated and confirmed by the researches of modern travellers. The history of the patriarchs is illustrated by the now well-known fact that in their personal and domestic habits, their tent-life, and their rites of hospitality, even their prejudices and notions of honour, in fact, in everything but religion, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have living representatives in the great nomad Sheikhs who still roam the desert. The history of Joseph, the sojourn of the Israelites, and the memorable events that preceded the Exodus, are illustrated by the numerous remains of Ancient Egypt that still exist; for the whole monumental wonders and antiquities of that land seem to have been preserved as if for the express purpose of evincing the authenticity of these Bible narratives. As to the route of the Israelites from Egypt to Sinai, the "Ordnance Survey" has traced their course from well to well, and from station to station, so minutely and carefully as to produce in every candid mind a rational conviction that the narratives in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers contain a history of events drawn up by a contemporary witness, and that the opinion of their being the production of a later writer, after the Babylonish captivity, is a baseless theory, which can no longer be held by any. The exploration of Palestine has been equally thorough. Then as to Assyria—the narratives of events in the reigns of the later kings of Israel and Judah—of the invasion and conquest of Palestine by the northern despots, and the long captivity of the Jews, have had a flood of the most interesting light shed upon them by the wonderful discoveries in Nineveh and Babylon. The hand of God has brought out these ancient cities from their burying-places to vindicate the truth of His own Word—to reprove the historical scepticism of the present age, and to read an impressive lesson to the nations of the earth. A voice has spoken from the very walls of the disinterred palaces, on which the campaigns of Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and

WALLYFORD.

By Mrs. OLIPHANT.

CHAPTER VII.

THE first thing that disturbed the tranquillity of the family at Wallyford was an unexpected visit paid them about the middle of August by Mr. Scrimgeour himself. He was an old acquaintance, and had taken John into his office chiefly out of friendship to the old couple, whom everybody respected, and a visit from him was not extraordinary, though the mere sight of any one from "the office" made Mrs. Cameron's heart beat, since it might always mean some harm to John. Mr. Scrimgeour gave very elaborate reasons for calling. His family had taken a house at Musselburgh, not very far off, for the sea-bathing season, and he had just come down to join them: he could not think of being in the neighbourhood without coming to see his old friends; and a great deal more like this. He spoke at great length, awakening their suspicions, after a while, by the very pains he took to soothe them. And his face was very serious. He did not look like a man who had come with no other motive than that of paying a call of civility. When he had made all these polite speeches, and complimented the Captain on looking so well, and Mrs. Cameron upon her daughter, there ensued a pause. Such pauses are not unusual even in the most ordinary conversations, but here it seemed significant, and almost terrible, as the stillness before a storm is often more impressive, more alarming, than the storm itself. Mr. Scrimgeour looked at the old people before him with a look that was very serious, and yet half-frightened too, while they watched him with an intensity of observation, trying from the very traits of his nervousness to read what was in his mind; for why should he be nervous? why should he turn his snuff-box round and round in his fingers, and clear his throat so often, if his visit were all for nothing? Isabel sat in the west window, a little apart, with her work. The visit of course was not to her. She was a spectator, looking on as from a distance; and she in her security wondered too, and looked at them, not knowing what it could mean.

This pause had not perhaps lasted a minute—but to Mrs. Cameron it seemed like an hour. The Captain sat a little in the shade, so that the expression of his face was not apparent; but she was sitting by the table with all the clouded daylight illuminating her and the workings of her countenance. It was a cloudy day, the skies all in a tumult of heavy vapours, mass upon mass of cloud, save where over Arthur's Seat, in the distance, a clear shrill gleam of pale light shone like some heavenly combatant keeping all the clouds at bay. Mrs. Cameron's face, and the little white shawl she wore, were like this clear point in the room, where all beside seemed in the shade. As that slow terrible minute lingered on, it was more than she could bear. She turned to the visitor suddenly, putting her hands together in her lap.

"Mr. Scrimgeour, you have something to tell us; something about our laddie; some ill of John!"

The Captain pushed his chair round towards the light, and Isabel turned too, a shadow against the window, startled by this sudden outcry. Mr. Scrimgeour turned his snuff-box more and more quickly round in his hand, and cleared his throat again and again, before he could summon courage to speak.

"Well, Mrs. Cameron," he said, "perhaps it is not just so bad as that. I will allow that I thought it *only* friendly to give you a word; but there is nothing gone wrong—nothing serious gone wrong—not that I know."

All at once a kind of majesty seemed to come to the father and mother; the old Captain raised himself in his chair, and Mrs. Cameron sat like a queen, with her face suddenly paled and stricken as with the solemnity of death, turned towards the messenger of evil. The anguish that overshadowed her was so great, that she looked worn and awful in the pale light.

"Do not beat about the bush," she said, with a gasp, as if her breath had been taken away; "but tell us—oh tell us the worst—tell us the worst!"

"My dear, compose yourself," the old Captain said; "do not be in such haste to be unhappy; Mr. Scrimgeour means nothing but kindness, or he would not be here."

"Let him speak, then; let him speak!" she cried out. Had she not feared it and seen it coming? But this verification of all her terrors seemed more than she could bear.

Mr. Scrimgeour trembled, though he was not a man who was easily overawed. "You must not take it so dreadfully to heart," he said. "I am not coming with any complaint. It may all be the lad's silliness and youthful folly. No, no; I have no worse to say to you. Nothing but that: he's careless of his business; he is very irregular. I see him about the town with gay friends, silly lads that are just a pest about the place, leading others away. It's always dangerous, Mrs. Cameron, for a young man to get friends that are not of his own kind. A lad that is in business should keep to business ways, and not consort with wild young lads about the clubhouse and the barracks, and so forth, that have plenty of money and not a hand's turn to do——"

Mrs. Cameron's face relaxed; the paleness warmed a little back into life; her solemnity melted away. Poor woman! in her anguish and anxiety she had her silliness too. A rapid calculation passed through her mind; if it was only that John was consorting with idle *gentlemen*, richer than himself—was that all?—not that he was being led into wild riot, into those grosser evils which were what she had feared: a great balm came to her burning, aching heart. A sigh of relief came from her burdened breast. He would be spending money, getting into debt, perhaps. Well, well, that was wrong, that was far wrong; but it was not like drinking, that curse of Scotland—or worse—or worse. No, no; God be thanked, it was not like *that*.

"You have taken a weight off my heart," she said, with a troubled smile. "Oh, it's foolish, foolish, very foolish—when he knows we are not rich; but still—if it's no worse than that."

Mr. Scrimgeour gave her an astonished look; her sudden relief startled him altogether, and brought back a little of the resentment against John which the sight of his parents had turned into pity and distress. "No worse!" he said, hastily; "I don't know what you would have worse! dissipation that makes him unfit for his work in the morning, that takes him away half the time he ought to be in my office. From my point of view I cannot tell what you would have worse—besides spending his money before it is earned, and more than his money. What he gets in my employment can never keep up these expenses. No, I don't know what you would have worse, for my part."

Before this was half said he was sorry, and then again he was glad, for he felt it ought to be said, notwithstanding that it was very terrible to throw, as it were, a bombshell between the father and mother—two peaceful good people who deserved, if ever anybody did, to have peace and comfort at the end of their life.

"This is very serious, Mr. Scrimgeour," the Captain said.

"It is very serious—if it had not been so, Captain Cameron, can you suppose I would have come to vex you? I don't want to be hard upon John. He is young, and no doubt it's a great temptation—and these idle young deevils—I am sure I beg your pardon, Mrs. Cameron."

She had no words to speak; her face had frozen up again into the severity of anguish. She waved her hand to him to go on; what did a word matter—devils! oh, they might well be called devils if they had led her boy astray.

"These idle young blackguards," cried Mr. Scrimgeour, mending his word, but adding a little more warmth

to the sentiment, "that have nothing to do, and don't care what they spend, probably because it's not their own that they spend, I believe they take a pleasure, that's my opinion, in leading away silly lads that are much better than themselves."

"You said you had nothing to complain of—nothing special to complain of," Captain Cameron said. He rose up from his chair, and stood leaning upon the mantelpiece, the stoop of his weakness altogether mastered by the strength of excitement and pain. Unconsciously a tone of severity had come into his voice too. When a man appears as the accuser of your child, it is hard to recognise his benevolent motive, hard not to address him as an enemy. In the first shock even the old Captain had scarcely sufficient command of himself to abstain from this; and Mr. Scrimgeour was conscious of a little irritation in return.

"I don't know what you mean by nothing to complain of," he said angrily. "I don't take lads into my office and pay them salaries that they may just please themselves. There's my work that must be done, whoever does it, and if your son never looks near the place till twelve o'clock in the day, and slips away at one, as is quite a common thing, what good is he to me?"

Then there was another pause. Mrs. Cameron, who had been stunned, who had no voice to say anything, looked pitifully at her husband, clasping and unclasping her hands in her lap. She had escaped from the first shock only to feel the second with more crushing force. Generally it was she who spoke for both. She looked at the Captain now, appealing to him to defend her boy. Something rose in her throat and silenced her. In her misery she found not a word to say.

"That's bad, that's very bad," Captain Cameron said. His throat was dry, and the words refused to come. "I don't know what to say to you, Mr. Scrimgeour," he said in a low tone; "you would like perhaps that we should take him away."

"And as for the salary—the salary," said John's mother, speaking with difficulty, "it would ill become us to take another penny, if that's so."

"Tut, tut," said Mr. Scrimgeour, unbending a little; "now you're going too far; the lad is maybe no worse than hundreds more; they are young, and they will have their fling; I don't want to be hard upon the lad. As for his salary, I'll pay him his salary as long as I get any work out of him. And if he would be punctual, he's not bad at his work, when he likes. No, no, I did not come for that; I came because I have a sincere respect for you, Captain, and for you Mrs. Cameron, as old family friends—just to advise you, you know, to keep a tight hand upon him, to give him a word of advice."

"We are very grateful to you, Mr. Scrimgeour," Captain Cameron said.

"And keep him, if you can, from his fast friends; there are two or three of them, and one in particular that is the most dangerous of all, a young lad by the name of Mansfield——"

A slight faint cry was audible in the still room. Mr. Scrimgeour looked up hastily. Did it come from the window where the girl was sitting, the girl who had taken no part in it all? But Mrs. Cameron caught his glance as it went past her, and seemed somehow to arrest and defy it to go farther. "It was nothing, it was only me. Oh! I beg your pardon. Go on, go on, and let us hear everything," she said.

Mr. Scrimgeour was puzzled, and did not know what to make of this: but he went on more deliberately. "A young English lad of the name of Mansfield; you have heard of him, perhaps? So far as I can judge, he is the worst of all."

"Yes, we have heard of him, we have seen him even; but he is no great friend of my John's. No, no, rather the other way. What is there against Mr. Mansfield, if I may ask you, Mr Scrimgeour? but he is not a friend of my John's."

"I don't know that there is much against him," said Mr. Scrimgeour with some impatience, "except that he is fast, very fast. Perhaps he's no worse than the rest. I don't say he's any worse than the rest. A lot of idle fellows, up to all the mischief that's going, races and every devilry. But this one I happen to know by name, that is my reason for mentioning him. He had some business arranged by my office. Well, Mrs. Cameron," he said, rising, "I'm afraid I've brought you a sore heart; but things are not so bad but that they may mend. If you were to talk to him very seriously, Captain, and point out that the end of these things is destruction. I have spoken to him myself, and I have not minced my words; but there's an authority in a father: and then Mrs. Cameron will come in. A young fellow will do many a thing for his mother. Sooner or later you will thank me, and John will thank me for giving you a word of warning. It's not pleasant either to you or me, but it's well meant, it's well meant," Mr. Scrimgeour said.

"And we are grateful to you, very grateful," said Captain Cameron. They all shook hands with him, one after another, and tried to smile as he went away. The old Captain himself, slowly shuffling, even though his wounded leg had been bad that morning, went with him to the door, and exchanged another silent pressure of the hand with him as he went away. And then slowly, slowly he mounted the stairs again; his wife was standing just where she had been when Mr. Scrimgeour took his leave. They were anxious to talk it over, to be alone to think of it; and yet he came slowly, and she stood still, making not a step to meet him; they were afraid to look into each other's eyes and read the misery that was there. He came up to her with that slow solemn step, as if he had a weight dragging at either foot, and laid his hand on her shoulder. "My dear!" he said, lingering upon the tender pronoun. "*My* dear!" She could not answer him a word. They did not notice even that Isabel had stolen away out of the room, and that they were alone to bear their great trouble together, as they had been so often before.

Isabel had not felt herself capable of saying anything to her mother. She had not known, indeed, what was passing, what she was doing. She stole mechanically out, following her father and Mr. Scrimgeour, conscious only of a longing to be in her room by herself, to see nobody, to have no questions addressed to her. She went and hid herself, not knowing what else to do in the great and crushing blow which seemed to have descended upon her so unnecessarily, so cruelly, she could not tell why. It was cruel, cruel! that was all she was sure of. If John had gone wrong, then John had gone wrong, and oh, was not that bad enough? It was what her mother had been looking for; it was what they had seemed to expect. Isabel herself was cruel in her preoccupation, but she was not conscious of it. She felt a sudden anger rise up in her heart against her mother. Why had she expected John to go wrong? and why, if he went wrong, should anybody but himself be to blame? When she got to the silence of her room she buried her hot head in her hands, and tried to steady herself and think what it was. John had gone wrong—but why, why should any one else be to blame? The face of the other seemed to shine before her, though her eyes were shut and covered with her trembling hands, a face full of brightness and sweetness, and candour and honour. "The most dangerous of all." She did not seem to understand what she had heard, yet scraps of words floated about in the air, and across her mental eyes. Who was it that was the most dangerous of all? It was cruel, it was a lie, it could not, could not be true. And then Isabel's mind was suddenly swept away, as by a whirlwind, to another side of the question. Mingling with the interview of Mr. Scrimgeour and her parents, floating across it, another half-distinguishable picture, came the talk with Jeanie which had taken place so short a time before. She seemed to see through her shut eyelids, from which a hot

tear or two began to make its way, the two somehow alternating, Mr. Scrimgeour seated against the wall, square and solemn, and Jeanie stooping over her work, running her scissors through the stuff. Would it be hers to ask herself the same question as that which rent poor Jeanie's tender heart in two—"a' the parish against him, and a' your friends, and naebody but you to stand up for him." Was it she, she, and not Jeanie, who would have to solve that question? was it upon her the dreadful lot had fallen? She withdrew far away from the sorrow of her parents. She refused, half consciously, half voluntarily, to think of what they were thinking or saying, so near her, yet so far away from her. Most likely she would be in opposition to them too. She felt herself separated, turned away from them by the fate which seemed to have got her helpless into its hand. How could she think of John?—they would think of John. And they would turn from *him*, and consider him an enemy. But she would never consider him an enemy. It would be for her to do him justice, to stand by him whatever they might say. Thus, in a moment, that separation had come about which is so terrible to think of. The girl's heart, so young, and soft, and inexperienced, had given up father and mother, to cling to—whom? With a blush that scorched even her hidden face, Isabel shrank from the word that came across her memory—husband! She had been a child yesterday, what had she to do with a husband? and yet her heart was relinquishing father and mother, and everything that had been most precious to her, that she might cleave to—one who would be alone if she did not stand by him, one who would be undefended, nobody taking his part. Isabel was heartless, unnatural, undutiful, devoted, and tender, and faithful, all in a breath. She would stand by him if nobody else did, she would believe no harm of him, she would take his part, she would make up to him by her absolute faith for all the doubts he might meet, the accusations that might be made against him. She forgot she was John's sister, and that he was in trouble, in this sudden wild outburst of consciousness that she was an individual, independent being, and had also a life of her own. It is a harsh discovery to make at any time. In the case of a creature so young it was terrible, it was cruel.

Meantime the two old people had sat down together, both of them weak with years and sorrows: they held each other's hands like two children, to support each other. "My dear," the old Captain was saying, "you must not be so downhearted. It is not as if all was over, as if the lad had lifted up his heel against us, and refused to listen to his father and his mother. No, no, my dear, John will not do that. He has been silly, very silly, but he's young, and there's no harm done that cannot be mended. He will listen to you and me."

"William," said Mrs. Cameron, "you know well what we've always asked for our youngest laddie, after all we've gone through. No prosperity, nor a fortune, nor honours in this world—no, nor even health, more than pleased his Maker—but to be a good lad. You and me, that is all we have asked for him, William, that he might be good. And oh, man, to think the Lord will no grant us that!—no even that, when we ask no more!"

"And what is *that*, O my woman?" said the Captain. "Is *that* not the greatest and the chiefest of all? Is there any gift in God's hand equal to it? and is not everything else in it? honour, and credit, and health,—ay, and wealth too? And what is there more hard to grant? You speak as if it was a small thing to make a lad good. My dear! to make a prince would be more easy. The Lord must buckle to that work Himself. He canna trust it even to angels or such like. What was it our Redeemer had to give up the ghost for, ye hasty woman? just that our lad and many another, poor men's and poor women's sons, might be good; it's the foundation of all, and the crown of all; it's just everything; and you say He will not grant you that—na, na, I am using wrong words—has not yet granted you that!—as if it was a nothing, a trifle out of His hand."

"It's the one thing He has promised, William," she cried, slow tears—the tears of age that are few and bitter—following one other at intervals down her cheeks, "the one thing without any condition; that He'll give us new hearts, new hearts if we ask them—without any condition; for other things you say, 'if it's Thy will,' but no for this, for it is His will. If we ken anything in the world, we ken that, that it's His will we should do well. And this is why I say—even that, even that! will He no grant us that? Let him be poor, let him be humble, let him be weakly and misfortunate, if it be Thy will—but here I will make no condition as the Lord has made none, William! Let him be good, Lord, let him be good!"

"Amen," said the old man, with the broad, soft, Scotch vowel giving solemnity to the word. And then he took a closer clasp of her hand and said, with a smile that shone through the water in his eyes, "Then why will ye not be satisfied, when you own yourself that you have Him on your side?"

It was not till some time after this that Mrs. Cameron perceived the absence of Isabel. It struck her with another pang, a sharp and keen sting of additional pain; but she would not add to the burden which her husband bore, this additional weight which was upon her own bosom. By and by she left him and went softly to the door of Isabel's room. Perhaps there was some self-reproach in Mrs. Cameron's mind. She did not go in, as she would have done on any other occasion, but called her daughter at the door. "Are you there, my darlin'?" She would not spy upon the first confusion of pain, which she divined. And what was she to say to Isabel? In any circumstances she would have been shy, as so many a delicate-minded woman is, to enter upon the subject of love with her child. She had thought of questioning Isabel on this point before, but her own old cheek had coloured like a girl's at the thought, and she had never found courage to break this tender reserve, which was not inconsistent with the perfect confidence between them. But now—what was to be said or done now? She stood trembling outside the door which at any other moment she would have opened. And Isabel came out almost as soon as she heard her mother's voice, her hair smoothed, her eyes bathed from all traces of tears; and indeed she had not shed many, for indignation and resolution had dried them before they could fall. Her mother looked at her with anxious eyes, doubly anxious not to show her anxiety. "My darlin', you must come and comfort your poor father," she said. "He has been giving me all the comfort he has, and he wants his bonnie Bell to make it up to him—for little comfort, little comfort, will anybody get this day from me."

"Mamma," cried Isabel, glowing out of her paleness with a sudden flame of affection, "you will not give him up at the first word?"

"Give up?—my lad, my bonnie lad! when I give up my life, Isabel—no before."

Isabel threw her arms about her mother. "And that is what I feel too," she cried.

What could the mother say? There was no name mentioned between them, and it was of John, who else? that she spoke; but she was not without a thought of the other, the other whom Isabel loved. Alas! there could be but little doubt of that now; the child had begun her individual existence with this shock and terror—if not before.

Next day was Saturday, and the anxiety with which the household waited for John's return is not to be described. He came in very good time, earlier than usual. He was very grave, even gloomy, in his seriousness, with lines upon his forehead that looked like care, but no trace of the levity or reckless excitement which had often carried such terror and sickening alarm to the hearts of the anxious watchers. He was so serious himself, that John did not even observe the intense seriousness of the

household, the heaviness and troubled hush of the house. There had been great consultations and much thought between the old people as to when they were to "speak to" John, and it had been decided at last that after the Saturday supper would be the best time, for "I cannot go a Sabbath day with that on my mind," his mother had said. And if John had been in a condition to observe, he would have seen that something of a very solemn character was impending. But he was wrapt in his own thoughts, as they were in theirs, and noticed nothing. When the meal was over; Mrs. Cameron stopped him as he was going out into the garden with his sister. "Your father and I would like to speak to you upstairs, John," she said, with a quiver in her voice. There shot from his eyes a look of passionate terror which scared Isabel, who alone could see it, and then he said, "Very well, mother," and turned and followed her upstairs. Isabel went out alone, and hid herself among the bushes at the farther end of the garden. How the world had changed to her since yesterday began! Then it was little different from Eden. There was more vicissitude, more excitement, than in that ancient paradise, but life was as sweet and hope as flattering, and there was no forbidden tree that Isabel knew of: now it had changed into a desert, barren and terrible, where yet the sufferers could stand by each other, but nothing more.

"John, my man," the Captain said, making his son sit at his right hand. His voice was husky and trembling, his large old frame in a quiver of suppressed excitement. "We have something very serious to say to you, your mother and me——"

Once more a gleam of sudden alarm stole out of John's eyes. His face flushed crimson, then grew deadly pale, but this was only for a moment. "What is it, father?" was all he said.

"We have been hearing about you from one—from one," said the Captain, hesitating, for it had been agreed between them not to speak of the interposition of Mr. Scrimgeour—"that knows about your present way of life. John, my man, it has given us a stab to our hearts, both your mother and me."

"My way of life? I thought you knew that as well as any one; and what did this mysterious person say?" said John, with dry lips.

The old Captain put his large and tremulous hand upon his son's. "You know what you are to your mother and me," he said, "our last son; and some have gone astray. Your brother Willie, we know nothing about him, if he is living or if he is dead. It was he that first broke our spirit and made us old folk; and now you are the last, John, and your mother is bound up in ye. My lad, how will you answer to yourself, I am no saying to your Maker, if ye take the little good that is out of our auld lives, and bring down our grey hairs with sorrow—— You must hear me out, my lad—they tell me you're living a wild life, John. John, I'm not good at scolding. All that I have to say to you is, that will never do, that will never do, my man. You've nothing but your own work to look to, and you must work; and more than that, and far more important, you're the servant of the Lord, and not of Mammon—receiving Mammon as meaning not money, but rather as the world and the flesh and everything that's evil. John, my dear lad, my bonnie lad, this must not last, it must not last."

And his mother got up in the restlessness of her pain, and came and stood behind his chair and put her hand upon his shoulder with a touch which was infinitely tender, yet almost timid. "My dear," she said, "my dear! O my bonnie man! here are two of us that would give our lives for you, but our auld worn-out lives will never redeem your young one. Your father says I would have the Lord make you good by force, and that cannot be. O my son, my son, will ye no listen to us, and be guided by them that know better than young things like you? The end of these things is death; they may be pleasant at the time, but it's written in Scripture, and oh, it's been proved over and over again in many a sore heart, the end of these things is death."

John sprang up impatiently from his chair, throwing off his mother's arm on his shoulder, his father's hand on his arm. "I wish I knew what you meant," he cried; "I wish I knew what you wanted. There's nobody has a right to attack a man like this behind his back, neither telling him what he's accused of, or who accuses him. What have I done? tell me that, and then I'll know what to say."

He stood up facing them, backing away from their tender environment; his eyes were red and his face pale, with sudden flushes of hot colour. He looked at them firmly, yet his eyes could not meet theirs. Fear, and yet a lurking hope, was in the bravado of his countenance, but misery under all.

And then they told him—one supplementing another—what they had heard. He listened with a miserable relief, he laughed with a levity which meant utter wretchedness and despair, but which, to them, looked like defiance. "Is that all?" he said.

"All! what would you have more? It is enough to ruin you, to take away your character, to spoil all your life," said his father with indignant composure. He had rejected their tenderness and driven back their emotion into their own hearts. Even Mrs. Cameron had dried her tears with a hasty hand.

John laughed again. "I thought, when they were at it, they might have made it a little darker," he said; "it would have been more effective. You can tell whoever told you that all this is an old story. I have not been out of the office for half an hour for at least a fortnight back. You can ask who you like, and they will tell you—that's an old story. I have been foolish, I don't deny it; but any man that has seen me out of the office for the last fortnight, I would like to hear him say it, that's all. I've done with that—if you believe me. That's to say. Perhaps you will take your anonymous friend's word rather than mine."

"You have little right to speak to your mother or me in that tone; but I take no man's word against yours," said the old Captain. "If you will tell us that you are making a change, that you see you have been wrong, I, for my part, ask no more."

"If that's all," John said, with a curl of his dry lip—never was there more mirthless, tremulous laughter—"oh yes, I've seen that I've been wrong, wrong enough, wrong enough, Heaven knows; but I'm turning over a new leaf—oh yes, I'm a changed man."

And again he laughed: then suddenly grew deadly gray and pale, and looked at them once more with furtive, anxious eyes, as if to demand again and yet again was this all? did they know nothing more?

The Sunday passed quietly enough, after this agitating yet unsatisfying explanation. They had tried to take comfort from the acknowledgment and denial mingled, which he had given them. It had been true, but was so no longer. What could be more satisfactory? and yet it would have been impossible to be less satisfied than they were. Before John went back, Mrs. Cameron, who kept the purse of the household, took him aside once more.

"My dear," she said, "you have been reckless according to your own showing, though, God be thanked, it's past; and you'll have debts; a young lad must have debts that lives in that way. Whatever they are they shall be paid, John. I know what it is to begin your life with a millstone round your neck, and aye have something you dare not to speak about. My own laddie, be frank with your father and me. Since you've seen the harm of it, and changed your ways, we're no such stern folk that we cannot understand; take my advice, John, and gather in all your bills, and make a clean breast to your father and me."

He gazed at her for a moment with a wild light in his eyes; he opened his lips to speak, then stopped, gave her another look, and broke out into the same strange

unmirthful laughter. "It would be no use, no use, no use," he cried.

"Oh, but it would be of use; listen to me, my dearest boy; if it was to the half of all we have in the world, your father would not grudge it, and neither would I—if that were to be the end of it, and you to live henceforward a steady life, a steady Christian life——"

"Ah, you would buy me off, would you, mother? It is not such a bad way—to make John Cameron forsake his evil ways, so much—to learning him to do well, so much more."

"There is little to laugh at that I can see," Mrs. Cameron said.

"Nothing at all, nothing at all," he cried with sudden gravity; "nothing to laugh at; if there was time to undo some things that I have done—and you could buy me the power to do it, mother!——"

"You can never get that, my dear. What things? what things?" she asked anxiously.

"You would have made a grand inquisitor, mother," said John. And he added faintly, "A little money is always acceptable." The upshot was, that he went away with a few more of those not too plentiful one-pound notes. But there was nothing, nothing possible, so far as he could see, in earth or heaven, to make one thing right which was wrong, one thing which he could never forget nor alter, he thought, were he to live henceforward like a saint through all the coming years.

Christ in the Tabernacle.

By the Rev. J. Elder Cumming, D.D.

No. III. The Most Holy Place.

"*Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground*"—that is the sentiment with which we approach the subject of the present paper.

A word of description, to begin with, of the "Most Holy Place"—the "Holy of Holies"—(for by both phrases is it designated, the one in the Old Testament and the other in the New).

It was the inner portion of the Tabernacle, screened off by the veil from the Holy Place, and was ten cubits long, broad, and high—a perfect cube. It had no floor save the bare earth; on three sides it had boards of shittim wood overlaid with gold; and overhead were the four coverings, of which the lowest (that which alone was visible from within) was of fine twined linen, with blue, purple, and scarlet. The Veil, which was of the same material and pattern, occupied the fourth side, being that next to the Holy Place.

Within this sacred room there was a closed Ark made of wood of the acacia-tree, and covered with pure gold, both within and without. It was 2½ cubits long, and 1½ cubit broad and high. Over the top of it was a plate of pure gold, called *the Mercy Seat* (in Hebrew *Kapporeth*, the lid or covering). Within this Ark were placed (1) the two Tables of Stone which Moses brought down from Mount Sinai, containing the Ten Commandments; (2) Aaron's Rod which miraculously budded; and (3) a golden pot containing some of the Manna which had been gathered in the desert. Above the Ark, resting on the ends of the golden Mercy Seat, were the figures called Cherubim; their faces were turned towards each other and towards the Mercy Seat, and their wings stretched out so as to touch the sides of the Most Holy Place. From a verse in the Epistle to the Hebrews it appears that the golden censer which held the incense was kept in the Most Holy Place, resting probably on the floor just within the veil.

There was no aperture whatever to admit light, and all the light which at any time was present was from the *Shekinah* or *Sacred Cloud*. After the rebuilding of the Temple by Zerubbabel, this Sacred Cloud never appeared; and we are left to infer that the Most Holy Place continued in perpetual darkness, save when the high priest lifted up a corner of the veil to enter once a year. ("The Lord said that He would dwell *in the thick darkness*," 1 Kings viii. 12.)

Having thus shortly described the Most Holy Place, I go on to open up its sacred symbolic teaching, as this is laid down in Scripture. The Holy Place meant the standing-ground of the Church on earth, in which the priest ministered; what doth the Most Holy Place mean? It means, as we are taught by Hebrews ix. 24, "Heaven itself." Yet not *all* heaven, for there are many things wanting; it is only such part of heaven as is concerned with the worship which is offered up from earth, and even of that part we have only the picture of

The glorified Person of Christ.

We shall find that fact after fact, as it is explained in Scripture, brings us to this.

1. Let us consider first The Veil. The Veil separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy. What did the Veil mean?—"Through the Veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Heb. x. 20). The body of humiliation which our Lord wore, which hid His glory, and which was "rent" at the crucifixion.

Christ entered through this rent Veil into the Most Holy Place (Heb. x. 20) as High Priest; *and He remained in that place;* He never came out (His *appearances* during the forty days of the resurrection were not a dwelling in the flesh—He then wore a "glorified body"—He was within the Veil). The Veil *is still rent;* through it we can *see* into the Most Holy Place (through His death); and by means of prayer *we* thus, even now, "*enter* into the Holiest, . . . by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us" (Heb. x. 19). Remark also that now, because of this rent remaining in the Veil, the Altar of Incense, "the golden Altar," is represented in the Book of Revelation as "before the throne" (Rev. viii. 3; ix. 13). The Altar stood before the Veil, but when the Veil was rent, it stood facing the Mercy Seat. Christ entered through this rent Veil into heaven; but how, and for what purpose?

He entered there *with blood.* "Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, . . . by His own blood, He entered in once into the

raised by this suggestion, namely the Christian culture of the youth of the country. We all know very well how much there is to alienate them not from the Church of Scotland merely, but from religion; and I can conceive no higher office for any Church than to throw around them the shield of her protecting care.

5. Conclusion.

I have heard it said that the ends for which this Committee on Christian Life and Work was appointed have been accomplished—that there is no more need for its services. My impression is quite the opposite. I believe that in the same measure as the Church of Scotland becomes—as God grant she may become — more and more a living Church, full of the spirit of love and of power and of a sound mind, the work of this Committee will go on increasing. The promotion of Christian life and work, in the best sense of these words, is the policy of the Church of Scotland. She needs no other policy, and I trust will never have any other. Let us seek to embody it faithfully in our labours and in our sacrifices. Let our aim be the spiritual good of the whole nation; let us stand aloof from the narrowness and the bigotry of sectarian rivalry; not spending the strength which should be given to the work of God in the attempt to win proselytes from other Churches; not stooping to the paltry intrigues of a political ecclesiasticism; but striving, in a spirit truly national and catholic, to promote God's glory, and to advance the best interests of the Redeemer's kingdom; and then, whatever may await us in the future, we shall surround ourselves with the most invulnerable of all defences, and merit in ever-growing measure the approval of every true patriot and Christian.

WALLYFORD.

By Mrs. Oliphant.

Chapter VIII.

When an incident like that related in the last chapter occurs in a house, it is as if the end of the world had come. For the first moment everything stands still—the whole economy of the family seems going to pieces—and even to sit down at the common table, and eat and drink as if nothing had happened, seems a kind of profanation, a coarse and brutal indifference: but by and by, when hour follows hour as before, and day follows day, the first impression wears off. There is some sort of explanation which contents or does not content the mind, as in John's case; or there is a silence in which the cause of the absent is still more effectually pleaded by those whom he has injured, those to whom he has been accused. This is what happened in Wallyford. The father and mother talked of John, going over and over every word he had said, every evidence for and against him, until they had worn out the incident, and, weary in mind and discouraged in heart, but no longer excited or despairing, had gone back almost to the same condition in which Mr. Scrimgeour's visit had found them. Isabel, who had felt as if she were called upon instantly to come to a heroic resolve, either to stand by or abandon her undeclared lover, and who had made up her mind, in wild girlish exaltation and desperation, to take his part whatever might happen, was far more perplexed, more confounded, by the sense that after all nothing had happened. She expected the storm to burst upon her, the whirlwind to carry her away. But nothing occurred out of the ordinary course. Mansfield was not referred to even in the family: he did not come: and an utter blank of silence fell upon the excitement. For a day or two she seemed to live in a dream, expecting every moment that some trumpet of doom would sound, and the catastrophe arrive. But nothing followed; until by and by she began to feel that the visit of the accuser, and all the pain and terror of that moment, had been but a dream, and that all was as before. When Mansfield made his appearance after that interval, the girl looked at him with eyes that seemed to herself half blinded with films of unreality. Was it he, always the same? or was it——? She did not know what she expected or thought. When he came in she gave him one bewildered glance, then looked at her mother. Mrs. Cameron had not spoken a word on the subject all the time, though she had been more than ordinarily tender and caressing to her child—but she understood the look, and it made her tremulous and uncertain in her welcome.

"It is long since we have seen you," she said, scarcely aware of what she was saying. Mansfield looked at her, opening his eyes wide with a flash of pleasure.

"Long!" he said. "Then you have missed me a little; you could not have said anything more delightful: for my part, it is always long to me."

Mrs. Cameron looked at him again with a doubtful, questioning gaze, and then was silent. This was the man who was accused of "leading" her son "away"—John's enemy, and her enemy in being John's, and perhaps doing more harm to her dearest daughter than to either. But when she looked up into his open face, and met the bright confident eyes which seemed to have nothing to be ashamed of, she was silenced, and could not say a word. As for the old Captain, he received his visitor with cordial pleasure. There was no change in his satisfaction at sight of him. Either he had not, in the preoccupation of his mind about John, paid any attention to what Mr. Scrimgeour said of Mansfield, or he had not thought it worth his while to take any notice. His eyes had not been opened, like his wife's, to note the growing attraction between the young stranger and Isabel. Isabel was his most beloved child, but she was a child to the old man; he had not even begun to think of any further development of life for her: and he received the young man with all his usual cordiality. It was he who chiefly maintained the conversation that evening. The Captain was glad to escape out of the oppression of the cloud that hung over the house. He was of an easier mind than his anxious wife. She felt it almost a wrong to her anxiety that it should be interrupted, that she should be beguiled out of her constant brooding over it: but he was glad to escape to freer air, to the larger world outside of his own cares. Mansfield's arrival was an unspeakable relief to the old man; it gave a new impulse to his thoughts. Mansfield had come, he said, to propose a last expedition in the little yacht for next day, if it should be fine; and the Captain accepted with ready pleasure, not inquiring into why it should be the last.

"That I will," he said; "it is the only taste of the sea I have had this many a long day; and a sniff of the salt water aye does me good, since you're content to be troubled with an old man."

"And Miss Cameron too!" Mansfield said.

"Oh ay, Miss Cameron too," said the Captain. "Isabel, my pet, go and get your hat; it's a fine night, and we'll have a fine day to-morrow; we'll convoy Mr. Mansfield as far as the coach." The coach passed the corner of the road that led to the Fisherstown, the spot at which Isabel had first seen her brother's friend. It was a walk of nearly a mile, such a walk as the Captain had always loved to find an excuse for, in the darkening; but it was

a proof of the pleasant new impulse given to his mind, that he should have proposed it to-night. Isabel, who had been wrapt in a half-painful, half-delightful abstraction all the evening, and who had scarcely spoken all the time, was roused by this unlooked-for summons. She looked at her mother wistfully, asking counsel, asking permission to go. Mrs. Cameron shook her head in answer to this appeal. But she said, "Go with your father, my darling. The air will do him good, and you too." She sighed as she spoke, and shook her head with a faint wonder. She had not the buoyancy of her husband's mind, and she did not understand it; nothing did her good, neither air nor diversion. It is hard for those more rigid souls who cling thus to their one idea, to refrain from blaming or despising those who can now and then throw off the burden. Mrs. Cameron did her best not to do so, but to rejoice—with some admixture perhaps of a stern pleasure, in being the only one who was wholly devoted to her boy—in the possibility which the others seemed to manifest of now and then forgetting John. But when she saw the ready and tremulous haste with which Isabel ran to fetch her hat, the other anxiety awoke warmly in her. She would not refuse her permission, but she followed the little party to the door with wistful looks. "You'll not leave her for a moment; you'll take care of her," she said to her husband. And to Isabel she whispered hurriedly a similar charge. She could not say more, but she followed them to the gate, and stood looking after them in the soft twilight, as they disappeared under the arch of the ash-trees. What could happen to Isabel in her father's care—never out of his sight? But in her trouble the mother could not go into the still house, so quiet and deserted. The air soothed her too, and the great width and softness of the summer sky. She paced up and down, from the door to the gate, till the dark so gained upon the light, that nothing was visible of her except the white speck of her cap moving up and down in that little measured space. And her whole being was so full of her son, that almost before her ear lost the sound of the footsteps on the road, her mind had lost recollection of them, and had returned to this one subject of thought. She walked slowly up and down in the soft darkness, thinking of John—thinking, no: she was not thinking, praying for him, pleading for him, as she did continually night and day.

Meanwhile the other three walked slowly along in the gloaming, which grew darker minute by minute. The conversation was entirely between the Captain and his visitor. Isabel walked on between them, saying nothing, wrapt in a soft haze of mingled happiness and pain. Their very talk did not penetrate this veil, which seemed to divide her from them in the very intensity of her consciousness of the presence of one of them by her side. Their voices sounded vaguely in her ears; their forms were like the unsubstantial figures in a dream. She was soothed and lulled into a delicious, passive quiet, in which she wished for nothing but to move on softly as she was doing, through the soft dusk, scarcely seeing the path she trod, feeling as if she trod on air. The cloud of alarm and trouble that had been in her mind departed wholly, and the pain that mingled with her happiness consisted chiefly of regret that the cloud was gone, and that she would no longer need to suffer for him, to stand by him against the world. When they reached the cottages which lay in a little cluster, just before you come to the Fisherstown road, one of the men lingering at the doors, enjoying the evening air, came out from the shadow of the houses to speak to the Captain. It was about some country business, to which Captain Cameron, always kind, could not refuse to listen. "Go on," he said, waving his hand to the others, "I will make up to you in a moment."

At what kind of snail's pace they must have continued their course, that the Captain might make up to them in a moment, he did not think: but Mansfield seized the unlooked-for opportunity, and Isabel did not feel herself strong enough to relinquish it. She woke up out of her dream when she found herself going on alone with him—they two alone in all the world, in the gentle dusk, which hid even their faces from each other. As soon as they were out of hearing he spoke suddenly and quickly, as if (she could not help feeling) the words had been on his very lips all the evening through. "Did *you*," he said, "think I was long of coming, too?"

"Oh," said Isabel, almost under her breath, "there was a reason; it was not just wearying."

"But a little 'wearying,' too? Don't deny me that; think, this may be the last night. And what was the reason?" he said, bending over her. It was safer to say something, to try to divert the conversation into another channel, than to be silent. So Isabel faltered and spoke—

"It was one—that spoke ill—that made us afraid of you. About John," she added hurriedly, shrinking a little away from him, for he had put out his hand as if to take hers, with an exclamation, "Afraid!"

"Afraid—of me," he repeated with a laugh, which jarred upon her in spite of herself; "of me!—you could not think I would harm you. Alas! it is all the other way——"

"It was about John," she said, confused. "They said you led him into harm——"

"John," said Mansfield, with a tone of disappointment. Then he added with some earnestness, "Never, never! it is not true—since I saw his home and knew—his family: since I found out—— No, no, it is not true."

"I never believed it," said Isabel, simply. The assurance was enough, more than enough for her. She drew a long breath, as if her bosom was relieved of a weight.

"You could not believe it," said Mansfield, "for you know how differently I must feel to John. John, *your* brother! you knew he would be sacred to me. I have always said," he went on more lightly "that I was not good enough to be admitted at Wallyford; not worthy to touch the hem of your garment."

"Oh, no, no; we are not such grand folk!" Isabel scarcely knew what she was saying, in the confusion and excitement of the moment. How good that it was dark; but even though it was dark, she could not lift her eyes, and stumbled as she walked, not seeing even the path, though her eyes were fixed upon it.

"You are far higher, far better than I—far better than I. You are so good, so sweet, that I should go away; I should not dare to lift my eyes to you; but I love you, I love you, Isabel!"

"Oh, Mr. Mansfield, I must go back to my father!" Isabel cried.

He did not prevent her. He even turned with her to meet the old Captain shuffling after them through the summer dust; but as he did so, repeated more fervently still, "I love you, I love you, Isabel!"

The girl could not say a word. They stood close together, hidden by the gentle dusk, while the old man came slowly towards them. The Captain did not hurry his pace, he came on tranquilly, thinking of nothing that could involve danger in that peaceful darkling road, every step of which he knew. He saw the two figures waiting for him, but he did not see the interlaced hands, the momentary stoop of one head over the other, the close clasp that did not last an instant. It was an instant in which a whole world was concentrated. When Isabel found herself half an hour after passing that spot with her father, going home, it seemed to her that it was all a dream. A dream! but such a dream as could come but once in a life, enough to have made worth while to live, though it were a hundred years. He had whispered "To-morrow!" to her, aside, "To-morrow!" as they parted at the cross roads. And then all was blank, with a mechanical progress back again, and the hum of her father's voice saying things she did not understand, in her ears.

Mrs. Cameron was still pacing up and down between the door and the gate when they returned, and the

Captain lingered, though he was tired, speaking of the sweetness of the night, and the scent of the flowers, and the few scattered roses that still remained on the white rose-bush, while Isabel passed them like a ghost, and flew upstairs to her own room, where she threw herself down on the old sofa, and hid her face in her hands, and gave herself up to the sweetness that had invaded her soul. Then Mrs. Cameron took her old man gently to task. "Was it just wise, William, my man, to say you would go on the water with him after what Mr. Scrimgeour said?"

"What was it Mr. Scrimgeour said, my dear?" said the Captain. "He has a right to speak where John is concerned; but who is he to judge another young man whose duty is not like John's? This lad is independent; he is well off; he is enjoying himself, but doing no harm that I can see. A lad that can navigate a boat against wind and tide, and take a delight in it, cannot be doing much harm, my dear."

"Oh, my man, you're aye a sailor; that is the way to get the better of you."

"Maybe, my dear. It would be wrong in John (though no doubt I would find many excuses for him), because it would be idleness, and his time is not his own; but Mr. Scrimgeour should hold his tongue where others are concerned. In this young Mansfield I can see no harm."

"I am feared, I am very much feared, that our Isabel is getting to think more upon him than is good for her," the mother said.

"Getting to think upon—— Our Isabel! Lord bless us all," the old Captain said, with a start of consternation: then he added, with an unsteady laugh, "My dear, you are seeing mountains in every bit brae. She is but a bairn—our Isabel!"

"She is such a bairn as I was when I married you," Mrs. Cameron said.

"Then, my word, we must see into the lad," cried the Captain, with an energy which was touched with wrath.

Isabel did not appear till Marget and Simon, with their steady tramp, came upstairs for evening worship. Then she stole in with dewy eyes dazzled by the little lights of the candles, and an agitated brightness in her face that went to her mother's heart. Her voice trembled in the evening psalm, and Mrs. Cameron thought she heard a soft sob of emotion from her child's full heart in the middle of the prayer. She went with her to her room when the night was over, and looked anxiously into her face.

"There's something happened to my Isabel," she said, drawing the girl into her arms. Isabel did not know what it was that was whispered from her own heart to her mother's as she lay against the tender old bosom which had nursed her. Was it in words at all? She never knew. But Mrs. Cameron left her, a little happy, a great deal uneasy, yet relieved more or less, as she had almost despised her husband for being relieved by the new thing. "One nail knocks out another," the Italians say. In this agitation about Isabel, which was not altogether disquieting, her mind grew a little less unhappy about John. "No doubt he will speak to her father to-morrow," Mrs. Cameron said to herself. But she did not disturb the Captain's mind further by any revelations to-night.

Next day was as lovely a summer day as ever shone out of northern skies; not languid with intolerable heat, like August in the south, but with a little floating cloud to enhance the deepness of the blue above, and a little haze to give poetry to the distance. The Firth lay like a great mirror under the infinite heavens, almost as infinite in depth and colour, its islands shining in it, the white walls on Inchkeith doubled, and glowing with intensest whiteness, one on the rocks, one in the water. But a softening distance was on the blue low hills of Fife, and Arthur's Seat on the other side lay half in shadow, vast and still, like a Highland mountain, though so familiar. Isabel was very silent, her father thought her sad. "Would you rather stay at home, my darling?" the old man said.

"Oh no, oh no!" she cried, and then blushed to think how eager her tone had been. "It is such a bonnie day."

"Ay, it's a bonnie day," said Captain Cameron, looking with a shade of pain in his face at the child who had been all his for eighteen years, but now was all his no longer. He sighed, but said nothing more all the way that could recall this thought, to which he was not accustomed, and which wounded him. The pier was unusually crowded that day. The last of the boats which had been out for the herring "drave" had come back, and by this time the herring curing was in full activity, and the whole population more or less engaged in it. Robbie Baird, who had come home a week or two before, stood on the pier watching the return of the last of his comrades, when the Captain took his seat on his usual place to wait for the arrival of the little yacht, the sail of which Isabel had already identified within a short distance of the pier. Her mind was in a tumult of tender agitation. She could not rest beside her father, but went to the edge of the pier to watch the little craft making its way to the landing steps. The little waves seemed throbbing like Isabel's own heart, coming up with irregular rush and patter upon the beach, as her blood seemed to be doing in her veins. She had watched for the boat many times before with a soft excitement and pleasure, but not as now, when, for the first time, she was looking for her lover; he, she thought, who was to be nearest to her and dearest to her for all the rest of her life. When they met to-day it would be in a new relationship; it was the first day of a new life. She could not but wonder how he would look at her, what he would say, under her father's eyes, who as yet knew nothing; and how she could lift her eyes to him, and bear the shining of his, Isabel could not tell. She was afraid of him, yet her heart and her eyes leapt out to meet him. When she heard a voice by her side addressing her, an impulse of impatience almost irrestrainable was her first sensation. She smiled vaguely and gave Robbie a little nod of her head, quickly, yet only half turning to see who addressed her. At other times she had been interested in Robbie; she was impatient of any interruption to-day.

"Miss Eesabell—I was waiting to speak to you—if you have the time."

"What is it?" Isabel was too much preoccupied to be gracious in her tone.

"I'll wait till another time if you're owre busy: or Jeanie will tell ye hersel'. But you've gi'en me your attention before, and I thought I would like to tell you——"

"Oh, what is it, Robbie? Tell me quick—for we are going out in that boat that is just at the steps, and to help papa down takes a great deal of care."

"If that is a'!" He went on talking, talking; his voice seemed a long way off to Isabel, and so slow and long drawn out. "You'll have to come to the wedding, Miss Eesabell, for you've had the most to do with it. We're to be married before the term. Jeanie's no sure about me, nae mair than you were, but she means to trust me all the same."

"Are you going to be married?" This roused her but faintly: the white sail, like a joyous bird skimming the surface of the water, came nearer and nearer. Old Sandy stood on the steps, ready to assist in the landing. Even Sandy took an interest; and why should this intrusive voice demand to be heard at such a moment? But it went on complacent. Robbie, like everybody else, thought his own affairs most interesting of everything in heaven and earth. Isabel was impatient even of the cheerful roll of good-temper and easy self-confidence in his voice.

"She's far frae sure about me—I'm no safe to venture upon. Ye think sae too, Miss Eesabel. But it's a bit faithfu' heart when a's said, and a brave ane," said Robbie ("Is yon the boat? I ken that boat); a brave

ane—that it is! She deserves a better man than me. If you had your will, you wouldna have her lippen to me, Miss Eesabell?"

She made him no answer. She could scarcely breathe as the boat touched the steps and some one leaped lightly out. But Robbie was as self-absorbed as she was. "We're to be cried on Sunday," he said, with a light laugh of pleasure and triumph, bold, yet not without a tone of shy consciousness and feeling. The sound of it came back to Isabel after with an acute recollection, though she scarcely noticed it now—just as Rob, absorbed in his own triumph, was not conscious, till after, that she gave him no attention. "We're to be cried on—— Ah! I thought it was him!"

But by this time Isabel knew nothing about Robbie, or who was looking at her. He had sprung up the steps, three at a time, and stood beside her, glowing with exercise, with happiness, with tender delight in the sight of her. He took her hand, though only in the common greeting to all appearance, as any one might have done—yet as no man yet had ever touched the hand of Isabel, enfolding it in his as if he had taken herself into his arms. He did not speak, and neither could she. They looked at each other, he with all the fulness of tender admiration, she with one shy glance, drooping before the fervour in his. And then they turned together to her father, who had shuffled forward at the sight of Mansfield.

"You see we're here before you," the old Captain said. He was ready to be irritated in his paternal jealousy, and he separated the two figures which had been standing close together. It was he who had to be helped first into the boat; Isabel was glad of the little breathing time. She followed, her heart calming down into a gentler composure of happiness, already more real and less agitated than before the meeting. She began to feel already that it was natural, quite natural, that they should belong to each other. She did not hear Robbie's low appeal to her in a different tone from that in which he had at first addressed her. She was deaf to all sounds but one for the moment, as she went forward to the steps, following her father, in a sweet rapture and absorption, isolated from all the world. It was a little tug at her sleeve that roused her at last, and looking up, she saw Robbie, his good-humoured face distorted with a grave look of anxiety.

"Wha is that gentleman? is that the gentleman?" in her own soft ecstasy she heard him say.

But Isabel made no reply. She heard him well enough—afterwards when it became clear to her, but not then. She went past him carrying her shawl on her arm, and followed down the sea-worn stair, where Mansfield turned to meet her, having placed her father in the boat. He seemed to lift her in, overshadowing her, taking possession of her, yet betraying nothing to the others. And Sandy threw the rope into the little vessel as she bounded away like a bird. Sandy's countenance, worn and weather-beaten as it was, glowed with amusement and sympathy. He heard Robbie's question, though Isabel paid no attention to it.

"Wha's the gentleman?" he said, rolling back upon the pier with his legs wide apart. "Ay, *thon's* the gentleman! as onybody might have seen that had an eye in their heads. And what may your business be with that? Ye have enough to do to mind your ain concerns, Robbie Baird."

"I hae enough to do—and so I hae, enough to do," Robbie said. He stood gazing after them with his ruddy countenance blanched, and his mouth open in his astonishment. "But yet I'll make it my business," he added to himself.

What did it matter to Isabel? He placed her among the cushions which he had arranged for her, throning her like a queen. Whenever the little party were afloat it was the old Captain who talked the most; it was he always who felt himself master of the occasion; though he had not a selfish fibre in him, yet it was impossible to Captain Cameron not to feel that on these expeditions it was he who was the principal. They had all arisen, he thought, out of a generous, beautiful desire on the part of a fine young fellow to please the old sailor, who issued his orders and handled the little ship (as he thought) as if he had been the commander of a frigate. It had been Mansfield's joke to touch his hat, to say, "Ay, ay, sir," like one of an attentive crew, with something that was half amusement, and half a wish to gratify the old man; and even now, after his wife's hint, the Captain could not divest himself of the idea that he was the chief person concerned. This made it all the easier for the others to carry on that delicate tender intercourse of look and tone which was invisible, imperceptible, except to each other. Even to that, Isabel contributed little. She received, she gave almost nothing in her shy modesty. An upward glance now and then, when she would catch his eye and drop hers again, with floods of soft blushes which were more eloquent than words; a trembling of her soft voice when now and then, at long intervals, she spoke; this was all her share. She was entirely subdued, penetrated, possessed by the subtle unspoken worship that surrounded her. Every word he said had a second meaning in it, a meaning that was for her. And his eyes seemed to say a thousand things to her, even when she did not meet their looks, but only felt them. They went up the Firth to Inchcolm in the heavenly morning, threading their path of light among other white sails of passing vessels and those reflected clouds that seemed almost as tangible, the blue water gurgling against the side of the boat, the light breeze lifting the sail, the sunshine caressing everything. And there they landed and spread their meal, and lingered about the rocks till it was time to return. There were a few minutes during this interval in which the two young people were alone, but only a few; and all that there was time to say was scarcely more than had been said before.

"Say that you are happy, Isabel. Tell me that you love me too," he whispered in her ear. If Isabel made any answer in mere words, she did not know what they were. Happy! it seemed too slight a word.

"We have kept the most exquisite for the last," he said as they were returning; "that is as it should be. We have never had such a matchless day, never such a perfection of everything, weather, and—feeling, and——"

"There is a melancholy in that," said the Captain: "whenever you speak of perfection, we're touching upon decay. I am afraid myself of the crown of anything: I do not like the longest day, for then they begin to creep in; nor the height of summer, for then we begin to go downhill without a moment's pause."

"For that matter," said Mansfield, "you can always think, if you like, of another summer, and another longest day, and another perfection to come. But I like the sensation, for my part. I like to press all the sweetness and delight into one, and drink it deep in a single draught. The climax should be the best: and then no weak falling away bit by bit, but all over at a stroke."

"My lad, that's materialism; that's your heathen, Greek way," the Captain said, shaking his head.

"So it may be, sir," said the young man; "that's my way. The summer should die after this. We have got the best, the sweetest of it. For my part, I don't want ever to sail upon the Firth again. Like this there never could be another day."

"That's your wild youth, my lad," said the Captain, shaking his head again. "You'll have to be content with less than perfection, when you're an older man."

This conversation filled Isabel with a curious mixture of feelings. She took no part in it, but she followed it with a strange sympathy, yet dismay, for which she could not account. It had indeed been the climax of the summer, the climax of her life. Nothing so sweet, so full of tender rapture, had ever been hers before. But she felt a chill come over her at the thought that for this very reason it was to be the last. Was it not the first rather,

the beginning of a dearer and more expanded life, a thing which could never end? This protest woke dumbly in her soul, but she was not in a mood to speak: words seemed to profane the blessedness of this crowning day. It *was* the crowning day. Never anything like it had shone upon her before. Her heart was afloat upon a sea of happiness, as the boat was upon those shining waters. But as they neared the shore, the influence of that other sentiment came over her, stronger and stronger, against her will. In all ages and all places, human nature has a superstitious dread of being too happy. Isabel felt a thrill of this fear go through her; perhaps it was this that inspired also what Mansfield had said. The last—why should it be the last? He had given no explanation, no reason for calling it the last. But there was all the long sweet evening to look forward to, and then, no doubt, he would make all clear.

Thus they landed again on the pier, a little exhausted and languid with so much enjoyment. Even the Captain had become silent as they drew close to the harbour. "If it is the last time," he said, "I'm very sorry, Mr. Mansfield. I suppose you are going north for the shooting; but you have given me many a bonny sail, and many a pleasant day."

"You have liked it?" the young man said with a little eagerness.

"Liked it! that have I, and more than liked it," the old man said, as they helped him out of the boat. The sun was low, making the whole broad Firth like a sea of gold, and turning into crimson and purple the dark hills in the distance, and the lower bands of headlands that shelter St. Margaret's Hope. Mansfield paused a moment by Isabel's side upon the pier.

"Look back upon it, look back," he said; he had her hand in his under the cover of her shawl, and once more he said in her ear the words he had said in the gloaming in the lane. She looked up to him almost for the first time with a full look of confidence and faith.

Then the little party went along the rough stones of the pier together, the Captain recovering his spirits, which had been momentarily subdued. When they came to the end of the pier, Mansfield paused and held out his hand to say good-night.

"Good-night! no, no, we cannot part like this," said Captain Cameron; "you will be expected at the house as much as Isabel or I. Come, come, it has never been like this before. You are coming home to your supper with Isabel and me."

He shook his head. "I cannot to-night. I have so many things to do before I—I must get back to make my arrangements for to-morrow. Besides this has been like no other day. It is distinct, it is itself, the sweetest, and the last."

"The lad is gyte, with his last and his last," said the Captain, startled, yet good-humoured still. "Come, Isabel, he will not say no to you; you must tell him your mother will expect him, and that he is bound to stay."

But Isabel did not say a word. A great cloud seemed to have fallen over her. She stood speechless, and looked at him with a wistful struggle to understand him. He was standing with his hand held out, a resolute figure, not to be led a step beyond the limits which he had set for himself.

"You see she will not ask me, even when you bid her, Captain. Good-night, good-night, good-bye," he said. And next moment the old father was all that stood by Isabel. The young man held her hand with a lingering pressure; he looked at her with ardent eyes; but he left her, while the girl stood astonished with a strange thrill of wondering pain, in a sudden blank of disenchantment and disappointment, as if she had fallen upon this hard earth out of the poetic skies.

"Well, Isabel," the Captain said, "my darlin', we must just gang our ways home. That lad has something on his mind; you have said nothing unkind to him, I hope. We'll not be so merry as we thought to-night, but anyhow we have had a pleasant day."

DEEP in the narrow vale below, the stream
Runs o'er its rocky bed, and here and there
Leaps down in foamy cascades, till it reach
The rustic bridge, through which another pours
Its waters o'er a tiny cataract,
With pleasant music in its gurgling voice,
And both united rush with growing speed
To pay their homage to the noble Spey.
The braes, with birk and hazel clad, send up
Rich gusts of song by feathered minstrels sung;
While in a thorny brake the blackbird sits
And leads the measures of the warbling choir.
Now through the woods the soft fresh winds of spring
Are wandering, stirring all the dark green pines,
And bringing out the beauty of the larch,
Awakening strains of low, sweet symphonies
Among the spreading branches of the elms.
In quiet sheltered nooks, on sunny braes,
The clustering cowslips ope their yellow cups,
And through the forest old, in lonely dells,
Rare flowers of many hues come peeping out.
From distant straths and glens, and Badenoch hills
The Highland Spey comes down with noble sweep,
And many a grand majestic bend, and rolls
By corrie, crag, and towering woody cliff,
Singing its ceaseless anthem as of yore.

WM. GARDEN.

MUTUAL INFLUENCE OF CHURCHES.—All seas and oceans are, in reality, one body of water, and the distinctive names we assign to them are only names, and the great forces of nature remind us that the geographical names we assign to them only express our own limited vision and experience. The tidal wave travels its appointed course, and visits every creek and bay. So is it with the Church of Christ. The distinctive names and forms are really less a matter of practical moment than what men call the ideal unity. The great currents of human thought, and the great surface-swell of feeling and emotion, rise where they may, do in effect pervade not one Church, but all Churches.—*From Address at the close of the General Assembly, by the Right Reverend the Moderator, Archibald Watson, D.D.*

WALLYFORD.

By Mrs. OLIPHANT.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. CAMERON had made a little feast for what she thought would be the betrothal of her beloved child. She gathered her best flowers, and filled her big old china bowls with mignonette, that scented all the room, and the old-fashioned monthly roses, which were almost all that remained after the richer blooms were over. She put out her finest linen, and the old silver which was her pride. If she did not do her child honour now, when would she do so? At all these preparations Marget looked on with curious but dissatisfied eyes. "Sae it's come to that," she said to Simon, in the kitchen. "I wish we kent mair of him." But when Simon repeated that safe observation, "He's a pleesant lad," his wife flew out upon him in impatience. "Pleesant," she cried, "what's pleesant? when it's a lad to marry, and no just a servant to hire." Marget's heart was deeply stirred with all the family excitements and trials. She knew as well as any one that there was something wrong, far wrong, with John in Edinburgh. There had been no confidences made to her, but she knew it, and they knew she knew it; and it was she who had been the first to perceive what was going to happen in the case of Isabel. Her heart was stirred almost as much as that of her mistress. She gave her whole attention to the cooking of the fresh "haddies," just out of the Firth, and the fowl, cunningly dressed after one of those old savoury Scotch recipes, which not even France itself, the land of cookery, can improve upon, and which, alas! are dropping out of the knowledge of the present generation. The sentiment that made mistress and maid thus exert themselves was not that vulgar pleasure in getting a girl married, which the vulgar attribute to scheming mothers and matchmaking women. Little good would Mrs. Cameron's life be to her when Isabel went from her. The mere idea of the loss of her out of the house, of which she had been the very sunshine, made the hearts of both the old parents and the old servants sick. Nevertheless, whatever misery it might bring to them, if this was to be the day of days in Isabel's young life, how could her mother and her tender nurse treat it otherwise, heavy as their hearts might be, than as a day of state and splendour? There should be no gloom on their countenances for the time of their darling's joy. They would do her honour, and him honour whom she had chosen, whatever it cost them. There was a trembling in Marget's vigorous hand as she softly shook the saucepan which contained her savoury stew, and still more in Mrs. Cameron's, as she took out her old plate from the press, and rubbed it tenderly before she put it on the table. "That will be her share," she said softly to herself; "and she must have this too when she is married." Her "napery," too, the beautiful old linen of which, as was the boast in old Scotch houses, there was such a full supply; the best of that too must go with Isabel. Dreary, dreary would be the house without her; but that was no reason why her life should be arrested and kept out of its natural development. Thus there were great preparations and much suppressed excitement in the quiet house. Amid all the mingled feelings natural to so great an occasion there was one perfectly genuine thrill of pleasure—Mrs. Cameron, like the cottar's wife in the *Saturday Night*, was "well pleased to see her bairn respeckit like the lave." It gave her a thrill of pride that so early, while yet she was not much more than a child, her daughter had reached that point of youthful triumph. She forgot that anything had been said against Mansfield, or rather she felt as her husband had said, but with a secret satisfaction in the young man's wealth and leisure, that for one like him Mr. Scrimgeour was no judge—that what was wrong in John was not necessarily wrong in a wealthy young man with no bond of duty upon him; and then it occurred to her with a quickening of pleasure that Isabel would be rich too. Rich, lifted above the cares that had weighed down her mother, able to do many things which her mother had never been able to do. She smiled involuntarily to herself at this; then sighed: and prepared herself to give a tender welcome to the man whom Isabel loved, though he would come to ask her for her chief treasure, and make the world lonely to her as long as she lived. The sigh was deep and acute, the smile was pathetic. She would welcome him tenderly, smiling—very much as, a little later, perhaps, she would welcome death.

They were not so early as she expected, and she went to her favourite post at the staircase window to look out for them. The sun had set; the western sky was still blazing with crimson and gold, throwing glorious gleams of reflection into the old-fashioned round mirror, which hung within reach of the west window; but the front of the house faced to the east, and from that the light had gone out, and the sky was chilly and pale. After a while she heard the sound of steps, the opening of the gate, but no cheerful din of voices as usual. Could anything have happened? she said to herself, with a sudden wild pang of apprehension—for who could answer for the safety of a little boat upon the sea? She ran down to the door with the swiftness of a child, and threw it open. The very suddenness of this expectant movement on her part seemed to chill still more the chilly silence with which Captain Cameron and Isabel were coming home. They looked at her with a certain mute reproval of her unnecessary excitement, as she met them at the door. "What! you're come back alone?" she cried; "what have you done with Mr. Mansfield?" Of all strange things nothing so strange had entered her mind as that he should not accompany them home.

"He had not time to come with us to-night; he had things to do in Edinburgh," said the Captain, with a grave countenance; only perhaps now did it fully strike him how inadequate the excuse was; as for Isabel, she followed with a breathless explanation, breaking forth all in a moment, so serious as she had been, into smiles.

"We have had the loveliest day, not a cloud from beginning to end. Even you, mamma, that don't like the sea, you would have liked it to-day. We ran all the way to Inchcolm: is that the right word?" she said, turning to her father. He was standing by, very grave, the greatest contrast to her smiling face.

"We are all tired, more or less," he said, "with the long day; a day in the open air is fatiguing, even though it may have been as delightful as ever day was."

"And this one could not have been more delightful," Isabel said. Her mother was standing in the doorway, stupefied with this strange contradiction to all her thoughts. "But papa is tired, and wants to get back to his own chair. I will run and take my things off," she said, and slipped in behind her mother, and ran upstairs, singing a scrap of a tune as she disappeared. The father and mother stood facing each other for a moment, with looks of consternation on the one part, on the other, of bewildered surprise and pain.

"What does this mean, William, what does this mean? why has he not come with you? Has he spoken to you?" Mrs. Cameron cried.

The old Captain shook his head. "I know no more than that dumb dog; I cannot tell you. Spoken? ay, he has spoken plenty. We have done little but talk all the long way; but nothing out of the ordinary. My dear, I'm tired, as Isabel said; let me come in."

"There's something happened," said his wife. "She's mistaken him, or her own heart—or——"

"There was not a word passed between them that all the world might not hear," said Captain Cameron; "but what you mean, my dear, or what she means, or what

he means, is more than I can tell you, for I do not know. I'm tired, as she says," and he shuffled in, saying not another word, and sat down in his big chair.

And a great chill fell upon the house—whence it came, or how it penetrated into all the corners, and made itself felt by Marget's cheerful fire, where she had put on the haddies at the first sound of the opened gate, it would be hard to tell. But so it did. When Mrs. Cameron followed her husband into the dining-room, and saw the gleam from the west window glowing in the big silver candlestick which she had put out in the pride of her heart, a pang of disappointment and foreboding ran through her. She took it away hastily and put it back in the press, feeling its full significance, and making haste lest Isabel should see too, and understand. The Captain sat very grave and silent, stretching out his limbs in his easy chair. He had not felt, he said, how tired he was till now; and he had not felt how strange it was till now.

"No, no, there's nothing the matter with me. Go and see to the bairn," he said. But when Mrs. Cameron went painfully upstairs, with a heart almost too heavy, and for the first time in her life, reluctant and half afraid to look her child in the face, she met Isabel coming down, still singing that little tune, still with her countenance dressed in smiles.

"So you've had a happy day, my darlin'?" the anxious mother said.

"Oh, a lovely day," Isabel replied; "the best for the last,"—this with a strange little laugh. "But papa's very tired, and he wants his dinner. There's plenty—plenty of time to talk. Come and give him his dinner," she said, putting her arm round her mother. She burst out into that little tune again before they reached the door.

"That's a new thing you're singing, Isabel. What is it you are singing?"

"Was I singing? no, no," the girl said. "I must run and get his wine for papa."

It was a strange meal, this dinner that was meant to be a little feast of joy and espousals; the two old people said little, but Isabel was gay. She talked about a hundred things, and was never still for a moment, naming everybody. But Mansfield's name was not named, and after those few words at the door, nothing was said about the day's expedition. As soon as the meal was over Isabel disappeared. She ran off to her room, once more bursting forth into that little bit of light melody as she left them. It sounded to her mother, though it was the lightest careless music, like the voice of despair. It was while Mrs. Cameron was still listening to this, and wondering with an aching heart, that Marget, coming in, announced that Jeanie Young and her laud, Rob Baird, were asking for a word with the mistress. "They're to be married in a fortnight," said Marget, "nae doubt they've come to tell the news. She's a bauld lass to take that ne'er-do-weel in hand."

"I cannot see them to-night, Marget; the Captain's tired with the long day."

"Maun I tell Miss Eesabell? I reckon she's wearied too. It's been owre lang a day," said Marget, with that divination which old servants possess. She would have shielded Isabel with her life; but she looked keenly at the quiet seriousness of the father and mother, and at Isabel's empty place, where she had eaten nothing. All these signs with one glance Marget saw.

"No, no, don't trouble Isabel. I'll come myself for a moment, since it's so important," Mrs. Cameron said.

It was almost dark by this time, and when Mrs. Cameron went into the little room downstairs, where Jeanie and Isabel had worked together, she saw little more than two dark shadows—the young fisherman standing against the light, with the slight young figure of his bride beside him. Mrs. Cameron's heart was not much tuned to congratulation; but she put on a smile for this pair, who had come, she supposed, to make her aware of their prospects. She put out her hand to them in the dark, which hid the emotion in her face.

"I hear, Jeanie," she said, "that Robbie and you have made up your minds at last. I am sure ye have our best wishes. Isabel is wearied with a long day on the water; but you may be certain that with all her heart she'll wish ye joy."

"Oh, mem, ye're aye kind," said Jeanie, with a trembling voice, "and with a' our hearts we're grateful to you—but," she said, after a little tremulous pause, "it wasna that."

And Rob, who had made a kind of growl of consent to her thanks, visibly shook his head against the faint light in the window, and repeated, "It wasna that."

Mrs. Cameron could not restrain a sigh of impatience. Oh if they but knew how full her heart was, how little she was at leisure to hear their stories! But she was too kind to send them away. She called to Marget in the kitchen to bring a light. "And sit down, sit down," she said; "the days are drawing in already. We'll have the long nights back before we know where we are."

"There's little need for light, mem," Robbie said, but she paid no attention. All that she was anxious for was to get the interview over, to return to her own cares. What could they have to do with any of the troubles in this house?

But when she bade the humble pair good-night, and turned from the door after she had let them out, nearly an hour later, Mrs. Cameron's brow had a line the more. Her lip was quivering as she said good-night. She went back into the little room where the candle was flaring drearily upon the table, and sat down to collect her thoughts. They had told her one of those dismal tales of humble life which are to be heard in every country, more's the pity. The subject of it was a pretty, silly girl, well-known to all the Fisherstown, who had gone to service in Edinburgh, and there had been "led astray," and was living in sin and fine clothes, flaunting her wretched little fineries still, not yet sunk into the misery that was sure to follow. "Poor thing, poor silly thing," Mrs. Cameron had said, with tears in her kind eyes. In her great purity there was an almost awe of pity in this good woman's thoughts. The girl was Jeanie's cousin. She had always been "light-headed," but she had no mother. "Oh is there nothing, nothing we can do for her?" Mrs. Cameron said. And then the two had looked at each other, and Jeanie once more had faltered, "It wasna that;" when Robbie, who had been in the background, suddenly burst in.

"She must bear her ain burden," he said harshly, with that intolerance which so often comes from those who have themselves most need to be forgiven. "Jeanie maun have naething to do with her, or the like of her; but, mem, it wasna that: we wouldna come ance errand to trouble you about the like of a lightheaded eediot! But there's mair behind. The man——. It's my doing. I thought it was my duty to you and your family, and the auld Captain that is kind to a'body: the man—I saw him the day, as smiling and smirking as if he had naething on his conscience. Lord, but I could have taken my fit to him, and sent him flying into the Firth! the man——"

In a moment she knew what he was going to say. Her heart contracted with a pang of sorrow, of yearning pity, of bitter self-reproach. It was she, she only who was to blame. Even Marget had been wiser than Isabel's mother. She remembered how she had said, "We know *him*," with a violence of self-condemnation which she scarcely knew how to restrain.

"The man was just the gentleman that's after Miss Eesabell. To see him close by her side, looking at her like yon, was maistly mair than I could stand. He wasna worthy to breathe the same air," cried Robbie with fervour; "and to see him standing by that innocent creature, holding her bit little hand. No, I'm no a saint myself," he cried, jumping to his feet. "You

may say what you like, Jeanie, I deserve it a'. I've no been blameless—far frae that; but I canna stand by without a word of warning, and see the like of *yon*——"

All this Mrs. Cameron thought over as she sat down in the dreary little room with its unveiled window open to the night, and the candle flaring in the draught. Was it this that had blighted the bonnie day to her child? this revelation of wickedness and misery darkening, all in a moment, the innocent life that knew nothing of such dismal depths. "And it's my blame, my blame!" she said to herself. What was she but the unwatchful shepherd, the careless steward, that had eaten and drunken and made merry, and never heard when the thief stole in, and let the wolf descend upon His helpless lambs? Other sorrows she had known, many and various, but never this. She had been a traitor to her trust; she had failed of her duty before heaven and earth. Her God would judge her; her husband might accuse her: she had been to blame. Oh if she had been only as wise as Marget! Marget came in at this moment to take the candle away and close the window, perhaps (for human nature is weak) to see also what had happened, and what she could find out. Her mistress was then at the lowest depth of self-accusation, longing to cry out to heaven and earth, and say, "I have sinned, and it is my blame."

"Marget," she said, looking up to the face of alarmed surprise which her faithful retainer turned upon her, "you have been wiser than me. I have sinned against my own darlin' bairn. I have let in the wolf to the fold, and broken the heart of my Isabel!"

"Mistress," said Marget, with instinctive partisanship, "how were you to ken? He had a tongue that would have wiled the bird from the tree, and a face o' innocence, a face of honour—ay, that he had! How were you to ken, that thinks ill o' naebody? I canna believe it myself, me that am an ill woman by the side o' you, and ill thinking. Na, I never could believe it mysel'. I said it, but I didna credit it, nor do I noo—nor do I noo."

"Then you knew the story? you knew the story, and never said a word!"

"I ken nae story," said Marget, with a little indignation, changing her tone; "but well I kent there would be some story; and I dinna credit it, I dinna credit it, afore I ken what it is!"

But this fine faith did not stand before the tale: nevertheless, Marget fought every inch of the ground. She vowed that most likely it was Nelly's fault, the little lightheaded cutty! she had never been a good lass, never, from her cradle—— Or at least, it was as much her fault as his; maybe he had fallen in a moment of sore temptation, and could not get out of it; no doubt he had been ill-brought up, poor lad! in all these foreign parts, where no regard was paid to any duty, and the like of this was just a jest; and that maybe he had never known what a Christian house was till he came to Wallyford; and a hundred other pleas, which she brought forth, with a sob to each, and with all the passion of false reasoning. This fight for him, which was no fight at all, but only a desperate resistance to conviction, consoled Mrs. Cameron a little. It made her feel less criminal in her own negligence, when even her faithful servant, who had doubted him, could see so many excuses for him. But it was with a failing heart that she went upstairs with this news to tell. The Captain was sitting alone in the drawing-room; there were candles on the table, but they gave but little light. It was not the custom in Wallyford to pull down blinds or draw curtains so long as the summer lasted, and there was still a lingering touch of red in the west, making a feeble glow in the round mirror, though the east window was full of the chilly gray of the night. The old man sat alone in his great chair, with his mind full of many thoughts. He was not one of those to whom solitude is irksome, but it pained him to-night, because of the cloud which he did not understand, which had come over his child. On ordinary occasions, when he was left alone, the Captain had plenty of occupation. Sometimes he would wander back to those old and far-stretching breadths of experience which lay behind him, and would be again, at his will, a blithe sailor-lad at sea, a young man full of hopes, a rising commander, trusted and looked up to; or he would look forward, perhaps, less smiling, but not with less tranquil confidence, to the future, wondering a little by what way it would please his Master to lead him through that dark and unknown passage from life to life. Many a dark strait he had crossed, with little knowledge how he was to get through. But this he well knew, he would get through, though he could not tell by what way. It was sweet to him to sit in the silence and quiet, the clear heaven shining in through the windows, the soft little light of home burning clear but small; perhaps a star looking in, perhaps a gleam of soft moonlight sweeping across the room. On such an occasion his wife, who was anxious and troubled about many things, would give herself up to a passion of prayer for her children; but the Captain, who trusted more and troubled less, fixed his serious eyes upon the world before him, and had his conversation in heaven, without perhaps one distinct thought. God came down and talked with him in the dusk of the mortal evening, in the calm of waning life. If ever the Father in heaven found man in His image, where could it be better than here, in this old man, charitable, merciful, full of love and tenderness, and a father's heart to all God's creatures? But the Captain's heart was troubled to-night, with the consciousness of a cloud about him, a cloud which he could not understand. He did not pray for this or that, but he held up his old hands, and called the attention to it of his Divine Companion and Friend, then laughed to himself under his breath, "As if Thou didst not see it all, far, far better than me." When Mrs. Cameron came in, she found him thus solitary, with a great sorrowful drop of dew in his eyes, but this smile upon his old mouth.

"Laughing, no, I'm not laughing," he said, "except maybe at myself, to think I was more attentive and knew better than the Lord. That's aye a man's temptation. I was thinking of prayer, the mystery it is, and of us bidding Him to see, poor creatures that we are, what He sees already, and far better. That's just human nature: the simplest of us, we would fain be wiser than God."

"William," said his wife, "what ails our Isabel? Why is she so wearied with what never wearied her before?"

"That is just what I've been asking myself," the Captain said.

And then his wife laid her hand on his, and told him her tale. The Captain was a good Christian, but he was a man. "The scoundrel!" he said at intervals. He clenched his large old hand with an energy of which even the youthful culprit might have been afraid. "The villain!" Then he rose up in his impatience, with a fury he could scarcely restrain. "If I was the man I once was!" he cried.

"Oh, whisht, William, whisht!" cried his old wife; "this is no the way for you to speak, an old man, and a God-fearing man."

"The hound!" cried the old Captain. "Do you think a God-fearing man should never lift his hand on an ill-doer? That's not my way of thinking. To lead a young woman astray——"

"Oh, whisht, William! She was nothing to brag of. She was always light-headed; it would be her fault as well."

"Granted, it was her fault as well. The scoundrel!" cried the Captain, lifting his arm; "and then to come and shove himself, the hound, into the presence of *my* bairn. Lord!—My dear, was I swearing? No, no, I was not swearing; but it's true I cannot contain myself. To sit close by the side of my bairn, to touch her with his filthy

hands. Strip that gown off her. Let me never see it upon her more."

"Why, father?" said Isabel's voice at the door.

She had come in at the beginning of this outburst. In her own room, in the darkness, Isabel had been schooling herself. She had said to herself that her disappointment was folly, that the strange despair which had breathed over her, without any will of her own, had been but a foolish trick of imagination. Might it not very well be that he had something to do that evening? that after giving up to them all the day he might not be able to give the night also? What more reasonable, more natural? It was she who was exacting, an unreasonable, foolish girl. She had bathed the tears from her eyes, and shaken herself free (she thought) from such follies. Could she not trust him? "With all my heart!" she cried within herself, "with all my heart!" and forcing all the disquietude and the dissatisfied sense of something wanting, out of her mind, she had recovered her strength and courage, and eager to hide all trouble from her parents, came out of her room to join them. But when she reached the drawing-room door the first thing she saw was the Captain with his raised arm gesticulating and denouncing some one. "The scoundrel!" Who was it? She stood still at the door, wondering. It was all like a picture—the faint tinge of red from the west window coming behind that figure so strangely excited, her mother deprecating, with one hand on his arm, the two steady candles burning quietly on the table, with the air of innocent spectators taking no interest in the scene. The scoundrel! who was it? But when the Captain cried out that the dress must be taken off her, that she must never wear it more, a horror came upon Isabel. "Why?" she said, in a voice which, quiet as it was, rang into the room like a sudden bell.

He stopped short with a suddenness that was as startling as his words, and held out his arms to her. "Come here," he said, his voice dropping and trembling, "my Isabel!"

But Isabel did not move. She paid no attention to this call. She looked at the old people with a look of suspicion, and stood erect, feeling strength thrill into every nerve of her.

"Why?" she repeated, confronting them almost with defiance. "Father, who are you speaking of, and what do you mean?"

And the old people looked at her with a consternation beyond words, with a pang so novel, that they were bewildered by it. All the submission, the sweet girlish deference, the humility of the child, were gone. She seemed to grow taller even in this strange inspiration. She held her head high like a flower on its stem. Suddenly she seemed to have glided out from between them, from under their wings, and to oppose herself to them, standing there alone. It filled their hearts with a pang incredible, unspeakable, to see Isabel stand alone, acting for herself, nay, for another, who was not of their choosing. Many times before this their children had done it, separated themselves one by one, gone out and become independent of father and mother. But Isabel! she was the last, the compensation which heaven seemed to owe to them for all they had lost. They stood and gazed at her, through tears wrung out by this strange new twist of those mockeries of torture to which all mankind is subjected: but no, not tears, only a sudden rising out of the deep well of their hearts into their eyes—with a pang of incredulity, of bewildered astonishment—Isabel!—they could not believe their eyesight; and yet it was true. The Captain sank down into his chair, all the sudden passion gone out of him. "Isabel, come here, come here, and sit down by your father," Mrs. Cameron said. "I have something to tell you, my darlin'." Her voice faltered. She was almost afraid to speak to her own child.

"I think I would rather stand here," said Isabel, advancing slowly to the table. Though she put on so stout an aspect she was trembling and wanted something to lean upon. The candles burning steadily in their calm indifferent way lighted up her face. The last ray of the sunset just touched her for a moment and then went out, and the sky showed pale round about in all the small old-fashioned windows, all calm and still around this speck of earthly light and pain. Then the story was told for the third time that night, with softenings and slurrings over of that which the mother could not speak plainly, or the daughter hear—but yet enough to be understood. At first Isabel faced her mother proudly, keeping her head high; then she began to droop with an occasional upward glance, then her slight figure swayed a little as with weakness, as the truth penetrated her mind. When Mrs. Cameron's voice ceased, there was a pause, and the silence seemed to close over them like something that could be felt.

"Will you tell me who said it?" Isabel asked at last.

"It was Jeanie—the girl's cousin—and Robbie Baird who found it out."

Isabel stood still, for what seemed to the anxious spectators, a long time, silent. And then the most incongruous sound broke that stillness—a laugh: she leaned her hands upon the table and laughed. "The two that are going to be married," she said. "Jeanie, Jeanie! She whom you told, mother, to stand by her lad though he went wrong and save his soul—oh it fits her well, well, it fits her well!" cried Isabel: then she made another pause; "but me, I've no right to stand by him," she cried, dropping down on her knees by the table, and hiding her face in her hands.

"Isabel! Isabel!" She would not uncover her face, or yield to her mother's touch. Mrs. Cameron stood with her hand upon the bowed head. It was her face now that was lighted up by those serene candles, a face all moving and quivering with that impotence of rejected sympathy, that piteous sense of counting for nothing, and being capable of nothing by the side of a suffering far more bitter to her than any suffering of her own, which is nearer to the infinite of pain than anything else in mortal anguish. Her lips quivered with that appeal to all things round her, to heaven and earth and God and man, which those who are stricken with what seems the last blow, have the privilege of. "And it's my blame, my blame!" she said to herself, almost with a smile at the mystery of it, the incredible contradiction of all her life and her love that was in it. The Captain sat with his hands clasped, bending forward in his chair. He did not say anything. His heart was bleeding too for his last darling; but he attempted no interference. He was patient and could wait.

But they were both startled when Isabel rose suddenly, uncovering her face and looking at them with blazing, tearless eyes. She was quite colourless, except where the pressure of her hands had left a red mark on either cheek. She said, "Why do you tell me this story, mother? What should it be to me? Mr. Mansfield is gone, he is gone; we will never see him here again. I thought so before, but now I am sure. There is nobody to stand up for him as Jeanie does for Robbie Baird—or if there is any one, she is not here. It might not be true, or it might not be all true, how do we know? but there is nobody to take his part, to stand by him—nobody that has the right here."

"My darlin'! It is my fault: it is my fault, that ever let him come here, Isabel."

But Isabel could not bear her mother's caress. She said with a little shrinking, "It is time for prayers, papa," and brought "the books," and placed them before him. A few minutes after Marget and Simon came into the room. Of all these four elder people Simon was the only one to whom the night was very much like other nights. He thought the story about Mansfield was just a "wheen clashes," and that Robbie Baird, far from a saint himself, might have kept "his tongue atween his teeth," and not made mischief; and he thought it was a

fine night, but he would not be surprised if there was rain the morn. And then, as steadily as he could, not without wandering thoughts to the garden, and whether yon cuttings were rooted yet, he followed the Captain's prayer. Sometimes it is a relief to turn to honest stolidity and calm in the midst of the passions and sufferings of life. Simon went on like the steady soil which he tilled, and which gave its increase, and soberly, year by year, rendered its due return for what was sown into its bosom. He was sorry when anything went wrong, and glad when all was well. But it did not pre-occupy his mind or interfere with his sleep, which was the case with Marget. To hear her moaning about "my bonny bairn" and "yon darlin'" all the evening through was trying to a steady-going man. But Simon bore it like a rock, and made no complaint. He was the calm one in the agitated house, and he it was whom Isabel selected, to the wonder of all the others, to talk to for the little interval between prayers and bedtime. She bade him come and show her where he had put the cuttings about which he was so anxious, and listened to him very attentively, while he gave a history of the last year's success in that way.

"There was thon fine variety on Mistress Robison, Miss Eesabell, a fine free flower with a leebreel habit. You'll mind upon it," said Simon: "if it cairries out its promise, I'm thinking I'll call it Miss Eesabell; but in that case, being a variety o' Mistress Robison, they'll think that it's a daughter of Mistress Robison," he added. "I'll call it the Eesabell Cameron, and then there will be no mistake about it."

"That will be paying me a great compliment, Simon," said Isabel. His slow talk, without either pity or feeling in it, soothed her, as the others, who watched her every movement and would have moved heaven and earth to ease her or do her pleasure, could not do. Sometimes the want of feeling is what the sick soul takes refuge in. She made him walk round the borders with her, when good Simon was, as he said "wearying for his bed." But that soon came to an end, like everything mortal. And then there was the long night and the dark, and the world of unending recollection and thought.

"No, no," said the old Captain, "my dear, let her be, let her be. You cannot bear her trouble for her, not if you were an angel. This is wherein our mortal state is most awful to my thinking. You cannot bear another's trouble, even if it be the darlin' of your soul. It's like Him that trod the winepress alone. Great or small, whatever it may be, we must do it, we must do it, each for himself; let her be! in the name of the good Lord."

To be continued.

Prayer for the Church and for Ministers.

A Letter to the Editor.

[We gladly avail ourselves of the opportunity which this letter gives us of calling the attention of our readers to the suggestions for guidance in private and family prayer which are at present appearing monthly in the *Missionary Record of the Church of Scotland.*—Ed.]

Sir—I doubt not many like me rejoiced to read in the July *Missionary Record* the suggestion so earnestly made, that more of those among our members who desire to serve the Church they love, should, at stated times, pray together for the blessings she so greatly needs. God grant that it may be so acted on through all our parishes, that our astonished and gladdened hearts may find that to us has come the fulfilment of God's gracious challenge to His people long ago, "Prove Me now herewith, if I will not pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Why does our Church give so little for Missions? While some communions joyfully send their noblest born and wealthiest sons into the ministry, why is it that with us this is so rare? While in America and Germany and England tenderly reared and delicate ladies are constantly offering themselves for Foreign Mission service, why are so very few found among us saying, "Here am I, send me"?

We give various answers to these questions. We say, We give little for Missions, "because ours is the Church of the poor, and those who are not poor are not, like the Voluntaries, trained to give;" the nobly born and the rich of our Church do not count it an honour to feed the flock of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood, "because there are no prizes in the Presbyterian Ministry;" the women of our Church are more backward than those of other communions in coming to the help of the Lord against the might of heathendom, "because they never think of it!"

But is there not a shorter and a truer answer to all these questions in the words, "Ye have not, because ye ask not"?

Do we not know in whose hands are the silver and the gold? How then can we reasonably wonder at our empty coffers, if we do not imploringly beseech Him to fill them? Have we never read that it is the Lord of the harvest who sends forth the labourers? How then can we expect them when we do not ask them? Surely we have forgotten that God can turn the hearts of men as He doth the rivers of waters, or we would beseech Him to give to us and to our sons and daughters such zeal and love that no other path in life shall seem so desirable as the enlisted service of the King!

Let us pray systematically, unitedly, and with earnest desire for these things, and we shall verily find that in all our barrenness we were not straitened in God.

But while all our Church's interests should be prayed for statedly, by all who wish them to prosper, there is one subject of prayer which I do trust will be increasingly on the heart and lips of our members. I mean the prayer of each of us for his own minister. This must be and is a subject of interest to all, even to those who are quite content that Missions should languish, and feel no shame at the lukewarmness of our Church's service to her Head. But how often is the interest shown in fault-finding! The minister is not attractive in his services; the minister does not urge us to give; the minister is cold and indifferent; the minister is narrow—while all the time we do not pray that God would give him zeal and earnestness, and love and charity. The way in which we behave to our ministers seems to me cruel. We expect from them so much, we do for them so very little.

Should not every congregational meeting, how-

WALLYFORD.

By Mrs. OLIPHANT.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER this, for nearly a fortnight, there was a blank, and nothing happened at Wallyford. On the first Saturday, John wrote to say that he was unable to come, he had "things to do," his mother would have to excuse him. It was impossible, he said, that he could get away. This had been a great trouble to the parents, but they had submitted to it; and now the second week had worn away, and Saturday had come again.

The entire family had always said and known that life was very quiet, and indeed, that it was dull at Wallyford. And Isabel had known it like the rest. She had herself said this sometimes on wet afternoons, or when her seam was long, and the sunshine tempting outside. But she had never known what it meant till now. When she got up languidly the next morning after that day, and saw her life, gray under the gray skies, stretching out before her with no change in it, Isabel's young heart seemed to die within her. It did not occur to her that she would die, as a girl with a heartbreak so often imagines, and hopes to do; but her life seemed to be dead, though she was going to live for all these terrible, dull, hopeless years. She would live till she was seventy perhaps—till she was as old as papa—and every day would be like this day, pale and gray and cold, with breakfast and dinner and tea—tea and breakfast and dinner, and nothing more. Nothing more. No expectation to make the long hours fly, and to make them beautiful as they flew. No sudden sound of a step on the gravel, or knock at the door, at which her heart would leap up. Nothing of all that; only the dull getting up, the dull walk, the long seam, the reading, the meals, and nothing, nothing to break the routine. It was not possible in these first days to keep a little vague hope altogether out of her mind, a hope that Mansfield would arrive one evening suddenly as he used to do, and that he would be able to explain everything, and prove that they were all wrong, and at the same time make it clear that she had a right to take up his cause and defend it, and stand by him as Jeanie stood by Robbie Baird. This lingering hope, or rather dream—for it was not strong enough to be a hope—was like a fairy tale to Isabel. She did not put any trust in it, but yet it accompanied her, faintly, far off, causing a little flutter at her heart when any sound unusual penetrated the quiet. But there were scarcely any sounds in those days that were not known and usual. Never had the imagination had so little scope. Nothing happened that was not laid down in the routine of every day. The fortnight—which yet was not quite so much as a fortnight—looked like months or like years to Isabel. She seemed to count every hour as it went by. When she tried to imagine what would happen if Mansfield did return, and if that half-told tale came to anything, her head turned round and she could not think. She did not even feel the horror she should have felt for the story that had been told her. At the end of this fortnight she began to ask herself in the maze of pain and disenchantment, whether Mansfield himself, and those eyes which had been so bright, and that tongue that had been so eloquent, had ever existed at all. Were they not a dream? and this was life—just such as it had been all her days—yet, alas! so different—just as it must be—never changing, through all the long interminable chain of years to come.

To see Isabel so changed, so pale, so spiritless and silent, filled the household with a pity which was more intense for the time than any other feeling. Even John fell into the background. It seemed to be doing her a wrong to be able to think of anything else. They made piteous attempts to amuse her, the Captain fatiguing himself with the effort to remember old stories that she had not heard before—those stories of his own life which had once been so delightful to Isabel; and Mrs. Cameron, forsaking her comparative silence (for it was the Captain who was the talker of the family), and growing loquacious for her sake. Even Marget exerted herself, nay, exhausted herself, picking up all the scraps of gossip she could gather, in the effort to "take the bairn's mind off hersel'." Isabel made a great effort to listen, but her attention strayed, whether it was from Marget's gossip or her father's tales—and they all looked on with a wondering dismal amusement to see that no one among them did her so much good as dull old Simon digging his potatoes, who made no effort at all, and could not be persuaded to see anything out of the way in the whole matter, or in Isabel's appearance, or in anything that was happening. "She's just in her ordinar," he said, when his wife cried about "yon darlin'!" and almost the only pleasure in the girl's life seemed to be to stand by him at his delving and listen to his slow, indifferent talk, and breathe in the fresh smell of the turned-up earth. They all stood and looked on, a little circle of spectators, more interested than ever were an audience at a tragedy, struck to the heart to feel that they could do nothing for her, yet smiling in a speechless wonder at honest Simon, whose company she liked best.

And at last the second Saturday came, after years (it seemed) of this colourless life. Even Isabel looked forward to John's coming. In spite of herself she could not help feeling that he must bring news of some kind; there would be something about Mansfield one way or another; either that he had gone away, or that he had not gone away; that the story was true, or that it was not true. Still more did Mrs. Cameron long for John—for himself in the first place—to see him, to see how it was with him, if he was persevering in the better way upon which he had assured them he had entered; and then to tell him of all that had happened, to secure his tender help to his sister, his sympathy with them all. Even, she thought fondly, this very trouble might be a good thing for John. It would be a tie the more to his home. He had a good heart, and no man that had a heart at all would refuse to be tender to Isabel, to give her what consolation was in him. Perhaps, Mrs. Cameron whispered to herself, this might have been an object with Providence in suffering so sore a trouble to come upon the child. She would not have said this to the Captain, who did not like such suppositions, but she allowed herself to whisper it to her own heart. Perhaps it might be for John's benefit that Isabel was to suffer. Was it not a law of the universe, in which there are so many mysterious laws, that the innocent should suffer for the guilty? Perhaps this lamb was to be led to the sacrifice too, like another and greater, that her brother might turn from his evil ways and live. Oh if it had but been herself, the mother, that could have done it with her suffering! But being that it was Isabel, who could tell but that this was one of the Lord's meanings? When the evening approached, and it was nearly John's time for arriving, she threw a little white Shetland shawl over her cap, and went out to meet him. First it was only in the shrubbery before the house that she waited looking for her boy; and then, as the road was so quiet and not a soul visible, she ventured farther and strayed out between the two great ash-trees. The road lay a long way before her, white with the autumn drought and dust, not a single shadow upon it all the way. She walked slowly along with that little excitement of all her nerves which her boy's coming, and the faint doubt always in the background as to whether he would come, brought to her. She wanted to see him before he should get home, to tell him all that had happened, to prepare him. It did not occur to her that there could be any doubt of John's sympathy. Perhaps he would say, "I warned you that he was not a man to come here;" but Mrs. Cameron felt that her satisfaction in her son's superior judgment and desire to keep the evil-doer from his home would almost compensate her for having to confess, "It was my

fault." Her heart was very full of this. She would tell him that it was she who was to blame, not his father—was it likely a man would take notice of the nonsense of two young things?—nor Isabel herself, who, the Lord bless her! was but a bairn and knew no better; but she alone, who ought to have known. And she was not without a lurking hope that her boy would console her and bid her not to blame herself so sorely, and say that it was nobody's fault. This she hoped without owning it. She went on, so full of her expectation of him, that she forgot to remark how far she had gone, and it was only when at last in the distance she saw a figure faintly reveal itself, first a speck on the road, then somebody moving towards Wallyford, that she paused, her heart giving a jump in her breast, and looking round, perceived where she was. She had come about half a mile from home. The two great ash-trees had almost dropped out of sight behind her, and nothing but the roofs of Wallyford were visible. She smiled to herself as she put up her hand to the little shawl upon her head. She had "nothing on;" but what of that when it was her own road, and her son was coming to meet her? A calm stole over her whole being. To be made thus sure that he was coming, that this time there was to be no disappointment, was of itself much. She looked back and then forward, and stood still a little, thinking it would not do to go much farther; for presently a cross road fell into this, and there might be strangers about, and she with "nothing on."

It was not till full five minutes later that it occurred to Mrs. Cameron that she might be mistaken. The soft calm in her heart ended in a moment, and the old feverish uncertainty leaped back into being. It was not John. John might be coming, no doubt was coming, but this was not he. It was a much older man, a man who had not John's youthful elastic tread, but plodded on heavily, making but slow progress, not much quicker than her own. Not being John, it mattered very little to Mrs. Cameron who it was, and yet she could not help observing this. Should she turn back? for she was not, she said to herself, fit to see strangers. She turned accordingly and walked towards home for some five minutes more, playing with her own desire to look back, and listening to the steps growing nearer, plodding along, with a sound of fatigue in them. Then she reflected that, whoever the stranger was, he could easily see that she was "about her own doors," and that consequently there was nothing indecorous in being thus seen with "nothing on." And by this time John might be in sight, which would so well explain a mother's errand. Accordingly, she permitted herself to turn round again. The wayfarer was close to her now. He was a middle-aged man, hot and weary, his face flushed with his walk, his expression, as she perceived immediately with ready sympathy, full of trouble. Poor man! something was wrong with one of his family, no doubt of that. Would it be illness, would it be worse? She wondered if she should not ask him to stop for a moment at Wallyford and take a rest, and perhaps a drink of something, as it was a warm night, or a cup of tea? Where had she seen his face? She was sure she had seen his face. She was so much interested that she did not feel as she would have otherwise done, the disappointment of seeing no other figure behind him on the road. Yes, certainly, she had seen that face before.

He took off his hat as he drew nearer, recognising her also, it was evident, immediately. Then it began to dawn upon her where she had seen him, and as this happened a sudden tumult sprang up in Mrs. Cameron's being. "Is it Mr. Johnston?" she said, with an indescribable sinking of the heart.

"Indeed, mem, it is me," the stranger said with a grave voice. And then, after a pause, being breathless with haste and fatigue, he asked, "Is Mr. John here?"

"John? here? I am just waiting for him. I came out, as you see, with nothing on, to meet my son. Will you not come in and rest? You have come by the coach, Mr. Johnston? John always walks. But come in, you must come in. The Captain will be very glad to see you, and John, no doubt, will soon be here."

"You must not be afraid of me. Whether he is here or not, Mrs. Cameron, you must be open with me," said Mr. Johnston, his face written like a tragic volume with lines of care, and fixing his eyes upon her: "I am a friend in any case; Mr. John will tell you that you need not be afraid of me."

"Afraid!" she said, with a cry of wonder and terror and indignation all mingled. Then she stopped and looked at him, casting, at the same time, an agonised glance behind him along the empty road. "Mr. Johnston, something has happened, there is something wrong with my boy."

"Something sore wrong," cried the good man, looking at her with anxious pity. And then he said, "I would like to see the Captain, mem, if it's not disagreeable. I would rather see the Captain."

"Mr. Johnston, you'll tell *me;* the Captain is old and frail, not so well able to bear, and he has plenty to bear already. For the love of God, tell me; do not go about the bush. What is wrong with my boy?"

He threw up his hands as if to put her away: "O mem! go ben the house, and let me speak to the Captain," he said.

"Is he ill—is he—dead? Speak, man, and do not murder a woman at her own door! is it worse than that? Oh me, oh me, I see it in his eyes, it's worse than that! What has he done? what has he done? I'm meaning," said Mrs. Cameron, standing still in the middle of the road, "what do you say he's done?" Her mouth had grown dry, so that she could scarcely speak.

The cashier stood wringing his hands, looking piteously at the mother to whom he was about to give so terrible a blow. "Mistress Cameron—oh that it should be my part to tell you! He left the office two days ago. I thought he would be here. I've had a sore heart, but I thought he would be here. I thought he would have let you know, and see what you could do. It's some—money—that must be made up, that must be made up, or he's ruined for life."

She was standing tightly drawn together, her elbows against her sides, her hands clasped to keep herself up. When she heard the word "money" she gave a cry, then relaxed her stern expression a little with a long breath of relief. Money? She did not understand. So little was she aware of delinquency connected with money, that she was bewildered and felt nothing but relief.

"Money," she said; "is that all?"

"All!" cried the other with an almost hysterical laugh. And then he added, "You cannot understand me. What do you know, a lady, of troubles like these? I would rather speak to the Captain, if you please."

"Money," she repeated mechanically. "I think my mind's wandering, and I cannot tell what ye mean. I told him if he had debts we would make any sacrifice; there are aye debts. Is it not that? then, Lord help us! Mr. Johnston, will you not tell me in plain Scotch? What is it you mean? He has put his hand to bills and such like—no that——" She paused, and with a sudden wild cry caught him by the arm.

"No that John—no that my boy—— No, no, no, not that—ye canna mean that. Money! No that he has taken—God forgive me, what was not—his ain?"

"It is just that, Mrs. Cameron," said the cashier, trembling with sympathy and agitation. "Oh, dinna be too hard upon him. The lad is young, and the temptation was sore; and up to this moment, nobody knows—nobody knows, but just myself. I thought it was best, in case of any mistake, to come and speak. Oh, if you will but mind that we must forgive as we would be forgiven. Dinna be too hard upon him, Mistress Cameron," the good man cried, alarmed by the expression of her face.

"Me—hard!" She could not get out another word,

her mouth was dry as the dust under her feet. She stood like a woman turned to stone, her hands tightly clasped before her, her countenance rigid with a horror which made every feature like marble. ("If that was how the woman was that looked back upon Sodom, I understand it all now," Johnston said afterwards; "the poor body had left a son there.")

"What have I done to ye? what have I done to ye?" the good man cried. "O my dear leddy, it's not past remedy! Take hold of my arm and come home. There is nobody, nobody, knows anything about it—yet—but myself."

"You are a kind man, Mr. Johnston. You have bairns of your own," Mrs. Cameron said.

"That have I—that have I" ("The Lord avert all evil from them," he said in his heart, feeling that if a son of his were to do like this, life would not be worth having); "but, Mrs. Cameron, you must come in—you must come in; and the Captain and me, we will talk it all over, and see what is to be done."

"The Captain!" she cried with a gasp; "oh, my poor old man!" Then she caught at the kind stranger's arm with a sudden revival of strength, not, however, to go home with him, but to keep him from the door which never was closed on any one. "Mr. Johnston, listen to me; a woman thinks most of sin, but a man of dishonour. This—will break my old man's heart: that his name, his good name, that is a glory to his family, should be dragged through the mire—that a son of his should—— I canna speak—I canna speak! Mr. Johnston, listen to me," she cried, clinging to his arm; "can you and me not do it, can we not do it, without troubling the old man?"

"Your husband, Mrs. Cameron! eh, I would not feel justified," cried the cashier, astounded. Then he did his best to soothe her. "You must not take it so bitterly, it's not beyond remedy. You will have a little money laid by, that you will not grudge, and we'll put it back on Monday morning, and nobody will be a hair the wiser; that's what we'll do: it is nothing so very dreadful after all." ("God forgive me for lying," within himself, the good cashier said.)

She shook her head with a woeful smile. "That's not the question—that's not the question; it's no the consequences, it's the deed. Oh, what is shame, or what is punishment, in comparison with having deserved it? That is why I would keep it from the Captain. You'll come in," she said, after a pause, "and we'll say, John—— Oh, I canna say his name; but the Lord bless him, the Lord bless him, wherever he is wandering, my poor lost laddie! but I dare not think of that. We'll say that he —cannot come the night; and that you—thought you would like a breath of country air; and were so kind," she went on breathlessly, inventing, as she proceeded, "as to come and tell us—yourself—in case we should be anxious. And so you have," she added eagerly; "I would not tell an untruth—so you have, being a good man, and having bairns of your own."

Mr. Johnston shook his head. "It's meant in kindness," he said, "but I never can think it does good. Sooner or later the like of that has to be known."

"I see no reason," she said passionately, turning to give one long imploring look to the vacancy and distance, out of which no advancing figure was to be seen. "I see no reason; if you and me can do it, why should the Captain be made more unhappy? If I can keep it from him, I will." Then she gave a cry of "William, William!" and turned round scared, to see him standing by her. The old Captain had come out too to look for his son. His genial soul had felt the chill of all the sadness in the house; and he shuffled to the gate to look for the boy who might bring some brightness with him. When there he had heard his wife's voice in the lane, and had come out, thinking that her companion must be John. He had recognised Johnston at a glance; and what his wife said had aroused his suspicions, "If I can keep it from him."

"What were ye to keep from me, my dear?" he said.

In a moment she gave up all resistance. She took her husband by the arm, not for support, but to help him. "No a word," she said, "no a word till we're in the house." She took them into the little room near the door, the dressmaking room. "You'll excuse me a moment," she said, and stepped firmly along the passage and into the kitchen. The fire was shining brightly there, but as yet there was no lamp lighted. She paused in the doorway and looked in: "Marget," she said, "you'll give us supper early. Mr. John is detained in the town; but you can put the chicken to the fire, for Mr. Johnston from the office is come, which is real kind of him, that we might not be anxious. I'll get him, if I can, to stop all night, so you may get the spare room ready."

"There's Mr. John's room, mem, a' ready, if he's no coming home the night."

"I said the spare room," said Mrs. Cameron imperatively. She would have stamped her foot if she had yielded to the impulse of the moment. "And you can give me a light," she said. She carried in the candle to the little room where the two men were sitting, scarcely seeing each other, and put it down on the table. And then there was a long pause, no one trusting himself to speak.

At last. "He was ill, ill when he had that fever," she said. "I thought the Lord was cruel, even to make me believe that He would take my bairn from me. Was it me, was it me, with my fule-prayers, that keepit the lad then? that keepit him out of heaven—that keepit him for this!"

"My dear, my dear!" the Captain said: the old man's voice was broken; he waved his hand to her slowly, he could not speak.

"Captain," said the good Johnston, "and Mrs. Cameron, you'll break my heart! It would break any man's heart, that had a heart, to see you; but you must not look at the blackest side. He's young, young—and this will give him the awfullest fright that ever a young lad had. I know him as well as any man can, not to belong to him—and I'll answer for him, I'll answer for him!" cried the good man, seeing the light of the candle doubled in the water that filled his eyes. "You must not dwell upon the worst, but think what is to be done to save him. The morn is Sunday, when there's nothing possible; and Mr. Scrimgeour is to be back to the office on Monday. Oh, if I had but come out here on Thursday, instead of waiting till the last moment; but now there's no time to be lost. You must think what you can do to get the money. I've not got it myself; I'm a poor man with a small family, and I have not got a hundred pounds laid by that I can put my hand on; but that's what we must have. A hundred pounds, it's not so very much."

"A hundred pounds!" they looked at each other; they were not thinking of the money, they were thinking of John disappeared two days ago with this on his conscience. Where had he gone? where was he wandering? homeless, penniless, no doubt hopeless, an outcast upon the face of the earth! Would he disappear, the youngest of the boys, as the eldest had disappeared, not to be heard of for weary years—never more perhaps in their lifetime? This was what was wringing their hearts, wringing out this bitter water of affliction in their eyes, through which they looked at each other, knowing each the thoughts in the other's heart. Johnston had a faint perception of these thoughts, and it was for this that he forced upon them the other subject, in which something could be, and indeed had to be done. They came to that with a little start of dismay. "A hundred pounds!" There was a momentary consultation of looks. "Mr. Johnston," said the Captain, with his tremulous voice, "we have enough for all our wants, but we've had many losses, we've had many—sons; oh, my dear, I know what you would say—'the Lord that redeemed me from all evil bless the lads'—but some of them have been—unfortunate; —and our little savings, our little bits of money, not

much in any case, have gone. We have this house that will be Isabel's little fortune; but I do not know, I do not know, nor does *she*, where to lay our hands upon a hundred pounds."

"If you have not got it, you will borrow it. It will be easy to borrow it with the security you can give. The bank will do it, anybody will do it," said the cashier. "Captain, you'll not take it ill of me, nor Mrs. Cameron either. If you'll come in to Edinburgh on Monday morning, I'll do what I can to put you in the way. I cannot leave the office. I have had my lesson too. If I had not been late at the office that Monday morning—but we'll not go back upon that—we'll not go back upon that."

Then there was a long silence again, and in the midst of it some ghost of a sound outside, a crack of a twig, a something, a nothing, caught Mrs. Cameron's anxious ears. She stole out to the door as swiftly and noiselessly as a ghost; the Captain raised his white head and listened. His face had grown darkly gray, darker than his white hair. After a while, as no further sound occurred, he spoke. "What could he do with it?" he said.

"Captain, I would like you to use your reason, to look at it as if it was another man's son. He was owing money that he should not have been owing, who can doubt it? and this was paid him, he being, by some awful Providence, the only person in the office. He paid his debts with it, Captain, with the thought that some way or other he would get the money and put it back—that was what he did. It is as short as it is long. You would have had to pay his debts."

"Do you think it is the money I'm thinking of?" said the old Captain, with a wave of his tremulous hand.

"I know it's not the money; but if you will think," said the good man, leaning forward in his earnestness with clasped hands across the table, "if you will but think! It was a sore temptation, and there was every excuse. And if he would but turn up to-night—which God grant—the money might be put back, and nobody ever know but that he had a cold, or bile, or something, and was away for a rest."

"It would be a lie," the Captain said.

"Oh but a lie—that's hard to say—it would maybe no be exactly the truth; but so far as that goes, I've taken it upon my conscience already. I've said he was unwell to the other lads; and I make no doubt it's as true as anything in this world. What could he be but unwell? poor lad!" said the cashier—"a sore heart and a head confused with trouble, and no the courage to face you, not bold enough to come home. I wish I may never tell a greater falsehood than that."

Mrs. Cameron had come in again. The sounds were never ending, her whole mind was absorbed in them. She could not hear what was said, for listening to those endless thrills of movement outside; sometimes a rustle of the leaves, sometimes a stone upon the gravel, sometimes the gate that gave a little click at intervals as it had a way of doing when the wind was in a certain quarter. There was no wind to-night, but there was this noise, filling them all with sudden tremors, with faint hopes. She did not pay any attention to what Johnston was saying, her whole soul was absorbed in this. "If he come to-night, which God grant," these were the only words she distinguished amid all that were said.

Then suddenly Isabel opened the door and looked in, making them all start. To see her father and the stranger sitting in this unaccustomed place, one on either side of the candle, saying nothing, and her mother standing by, saying nothing, with her hands clasped and that look of listening in her eyes, though there seemed nothing to listen for, bewildered Isabel. She said, "Marget sent me to tell you supper was ready. Is there anything the matter? is John—not coming?" and she gazed with rising colour at the stranger, whom she had never seen before.

"This is his sister?" Johnston said.

"Hush, Isabel, I thought I heard a foot; oh, whisht, whisht, and let me hear."

"Ay, it is his sister," said the Captain with a sigh, "the last one that we have left."

Then Mrs. Cameron was roused to a sense of that hospitality in which, happy or wretched, she could not fail. "Mr. Johnston has taken a long walk and given himself much trouble for our sake," she said, with a faltering voice; "we must not let him suffer because we are—not ourselves. And we must not keep the supper waiting either, or the servants out of their beds. They cannot bide to be late on a Saturday night. We'll wait no longer. Isabel, this is Mr. Johnston from the office. Your brother—is perhaps not coming to-night—we cannot say; he may be here at any time, or he may come to-morrow, any time; we cannot calculate upon him. Take you the candle, my darlin', and show the way. I'll just step out one moment and see if I can see any signs of him upon the road."

The supper was a strange meal. They all sat round the table as if there was some one lying dead in the house, with the same effort at conversation—a single sentence with long intervals between, a pretence of eating. Mr. Johnston, in spite of himself, had a good appetite. He was grieved above measure, but yet it was not his own son that was in trouble, and he had taken a long walk, and missed an earlier meal, and, though he was half ashamed of himself, he ate heartily. It was perhaps the only thing that could have roused Mrs. Cameron and made her forget herself. She served him with as much care as if the feast had been one of gladness. As for the Captain, after a vain effort, he pushed away his plate: "I cannot look at food," he said. It was the only impatient word that escaped him.

"You must not say that, William. Mr. Johnston, I have a nice little bittie waiting for you here, just a morsel. You must not mind what the Captain says. He is a poor eater at the best of times," said Mrs. Cameron, pressing her guest to eat with old-fashioned urgency. Isabel sat by with a pale face, surprised out of all thought of her own trouble, but not venturing to ask any questions. And thus the ceremonial of the meal went on—that ceremonial which we all observe whatever is happening, the one which is never omitted. When it was over, Mr. Johnston went away. He was still in time to catch the last coach at the cross-road. He left them, giving a great many instructions as to what was to be done on Monday. Before twelve o'clock the money must be replaced, but in the meantime, during this terrible night and the Sunday that followed, nothing, nothing was possible, except to wait.

The household of Wallyford lay down to its rest that night as on other nights. All but one; when she had seen the others in their rooms and all quiet, Mrs. Cameron stole away downstairs with her candle. She left a light to shine from her window, which looked upon the road, so that any wayfarer might see it from afar, and the Captain lay watching its flicker from under his half-closed eyelids, silent even from thought, lest he should miss the possible sound of the prodigal's return. His wife went downstairs to the little room beside the door. "What good would it do me to go to my bed? I would be only the more wakeful. And up there we might not hear him," she said. She took the first book she could find, and sat down with it, with the window open to hear the better; and now and then she tried to read. It was a strange sight to see her with her spectacles bending her head for a moment over the book, then stopping to listen—now and then stealing out like a ghost to the door to see if any one was coming. Once somebody stumbled by late, some Saturday night reveller making his unsteady way to one of the cottages farther on, and the sound of his steps coming up the road, heard ever so far off in the deep quiet of the night, roused her to the wildest excitement. But they passed, and all was still again. She sat there, with the keen little flame of the candle watching her, through all the thousand noises of the summer night; but not one of them was the wanderer coming home. [*To be continued.*

Have you ever sought to dissemble your regard for religion, and to make yourself out as being less thoughtful and serious than you actually are? Would you be taken somewhat aback did a neighbour, coming suddenly in, find you reading your Bible, if it were not, indeed, at the recognised hour of family worship? Would you start up with a blush on your cheek, were you unexpectedly seen by some one down on your knees in prayer? And, however earnest you may be in church and in your private devotions, do you act at other times as if you almost studied to disabuse people's minds of the idea that you are interested in the things which concern your peace?

Have you for some time had on your mind some Christian duty, which you feel you ought to perform, but from the performance of which you always shrink? Perhaps you are the head of a family, who feel you ought to lead the devotions of your household. Perhaps you are a young man or woman sharing rooms with an ungodly companion, who tremble inwardly as you throw yourself down prayerless night by night on your bed. Perhaps you are a boy or girl at school, whose conscience reproves you keenly for never protesting against the wrong words which greet your ears. But you always hesitate to act out your convictions. You dread having the finger of scorn pointed at you, and hearing the words, "Oh me! he is growing pious; he is setting up as a saint."

Have you ever heard this, that, or the other earthly panacea for the evils of the world eloquently described, earnestly pressed, and, however deep your own personal faith in the power of the gospel, did you shrink from saying boldly, "Well, all those prescriptions may be good and helpful in their way, but are you not forgetting the remedy which is by far the most deep-reaching and effective of all? There is no panacea for the sins and sorrows of humanity which can, for a moment, be compared with the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Alas! alas! we cannot flatter ourselves that the old shame of the gospel has yet disappeared from the world. You may often meet with it still, even among professing Christians, among men and women who call themselves by Christ's name, and regularly compass Christ's Table.

Common, however, as this sin is, it is most hateful in the sight of the Lord. A time is coming when Jesus Christ shall descend from heaven in power and great glory, and when you, and I, and all of us, shall stand before His judgment throne. Then will He be ashamed of those who were ashamed of Him. Then will He disown before His angels and saints those who disowned Him among their fellow-men. "Those," He will exclaim, "are people who were ashamed, not of the works of iniquity, but of Me and of My words; who blushed to be seen in company, not with the worldly and even the profane, but with their Lord and Saviour! It pains and grieves Me to look on them. Away with them from My presence!"

Is it any wonder? What were they ashamed of? Of something low, contemptible, shameworthy? Ah! they were ashamed of that into whose marvels the angels delight to look; of that in which we have the grandest manifestation of the Divine power and compassion, the Divine wisdom and grace; of that which feeds the mind with the noblest objects of thought, and blesses the conscience with a deep and enduring peace; which robs death of its sting and the grave of its victory; which peoples the eternal future for us with friendly voices and welcoming looks, with a Father's beaming face and the kindly grasp of a Saviour's hand; which opens up before us, at a time when otherwise the horizon of our destiny were at its coldest, and bleakest, and darkest, the near prospect of a land where "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold," and where the days of our mourning shall be ended. True, Jesus Christ died on the cross, died the death then reserved for the vilest malefactors; but, knowing as we know, that He voluntarily, gladly endured that death for us, surely we have then the greatest of all reasons for loving Him and for glorying in His gospel! There is nothing in the world so beautiful and adorable as love—self-forgetting, self-sacrificing love; and nowhere will you find such a wonderful display of love as in the suffering cross of the Lord Jesus. It is, indeed, strange, almost inexplicable, this shame of the gospel.

Let us try to rid ourselves of this shameful shame, and to say rather to those who may sneer at us for honouring Christ and His words, as David said to Michal, If this is to be vile, "I will yet be more vile." Let us try never to speak or look as if the gospel were something to be apologised for, or mentioned with bated breath, but rather to speak and look as if we believed, which surely we do believe, that the true, the right, the manly thing, is to vindicate for it the supreme place in men's hearts and lives. While we do not obtrude our religion, let us never conceal it; while we avoid all ostentation and display, let us never lower our Christian flag before any one; let us never treat our Saviour as people sometimes treat a poor relation, whom they are ready enough to acknowledge in a quiet way, but whom they would rather not openly recognise before the world. Amen.

WALLYFORD.

By Mrs. OLIPHANT.

CHAPTER XI.

NOTHING happened on the Sunday after. The family went to church as usual, leaving Mrs. Cameron alone in the house—to rest, she said, but the rest she took was not much. The day was spent in watching, but no one came. And on Monday morning, by the

early coach, Mrs. Cameron went in to Edinburgh. The Captain had proposed to go himself, but his rheumatism and his wounds were all the worse for this agitation, and that idea had been given up. Isabel walked down with her mother to the cross road, where the coach passed; they were both very pale. "You will not be out of the way for an instant till I come back," the mother said, "not for an instant, my darlin'. If he comes back, be there to welcome him. Let him not arrive as if he was not looked for, as if there was nobody to care for him."

"I will be there, mother," Isabel said. This was repeated, with a little difference of words, two or three times as they walked down through the fresh air of the early morning; but little else was said between them. Mrs. Cameron was pale, but she never had been more alert and strong. Her vigil had excited her, and brought all her reserve force to her aid. What might happen after was another matter, but in the meantime she was strong for all she had to do. There were one or two startled exclamations when she stepped into the coach, and one benevolent person "hoped there was nothing the matter with any of her sons."

"John is not just in his ordinary," she replied, "but nothing serious, I hope;" and she held herself up, and talked on the usual subjects with an occasional smile, letting no one divine the nature of her errand. One of the other passengers was Mr. Bruce, the minister, who was in great spirits about his son. Rob was coming home; he had done so well that he was to get a junior partnership, and live either in London at the head office, or perhaps even in Edinburgh, which would be better still. Mrs. Cameron's heart contracted with a pang that was not envy but comparison. Oh no, she wished no harm to anybody's son; but to hear of the prosperity of Rob Bruce, and see his father's beaming countenance, when she herself was going on such an errand, was bitter: how could it be but bitter? "You'll be expecting him home soon?" she said, trying with all her might to look and also to feel (poor mother!) sympathetic with her friend's joy.

"Oh, very soon; he will be in London now," said the minister, all smiles. She smiled too, heroically, and kept all her sighing deep in her own breast. This was the youth who had loved Isabel from her childhood. If he loved her still, as no doubt he must, for where was there another like her? alas! her heart was robbed away from him. What wonder if in her secret soul, underneath her smiles, poor Mrs. Cameron felt as if everything was against her, as if God Himself was on the other side. "All Thy waves have gone over me," she said in her heart.

When she went, with her pale face, and a sort of majesty of trouble about her, to the banker who had known the family for years, and knew all their affairs, her errand, though it was humiliating to her pride, was not difficult. She took with her papers, the title-deeds of their house, their only property. "It is for a very urgent occasion," she said. "The Captain is not a man, I need not tell you, to think little of debt, or go into it if he can help it. You will see in his letter what he says. I must have it now, without delay, or I must go elsewhere."

"You shall not go elsewhere," he said. It was not a difficult matter, after all. It hurt nothing but the pride of independence in the old people, who had never been in debt, and dreaded it as only people with small incomes dread that crushing burden. It was still not eleven o'clock when she entered, with a new pang, the office where she had gone often to see John, and where his desk was the first thing that caught her eye. The other young men looked up curiously to see a lady come in, but the cashier was anxiously awaiting her arrival. "Good morning, Mrs. Cameron," he said, hurrying to meet her, and pronouncing her name with elaborate distinctness, that all might hear. "I hope your son is better this morning?"

The surprise of the question almost threw her off her guard. She looked at him for a moment with a dismayed consciousness of deception, a quivering of her lip, which scarcely permitted her to say a word. "There is no difference," she said at length.

That was no lie, as Johnston impressed upon her as he led her into Mr. Scrimgeour's room. "No lie—but what could you have said better if he had been at home in his bed with a sore cold, which is what they all think?" the cashier said, almost with a chuckle at his own ingenuity.

Mrs. Cameron was a proud woman by nature. She had scorned all these little arts of deception, of which so many people think little, all her life. "I think I would rather tell a lie right out," she said, wiping away with her tremulous hand a bitter drop from the corner of her eye, "than deceive with words that are half true."

"Hoot, mem, hoot!" said Johnston, whose spirits had risen at the sight of the notes which she handed to him. "We must not look at things so close. God be thanked, we've saved him whether or no."

Saved him! had they saved him? She sat down in sheer exhaustion in Mr. Scrimgeour's room, where John had come so often to receive his directions, and sometimes to be scolded for not observing them. The bare office walls, the heavy furniture, desks and tables, seemed to turn round before her eyes; now that her mission was accomplished her strength was failing. The cashier ran to a private cupboard and brought her a glass of wine, but she waved it away. "I could not touch it, I could not touch it," she cried. She was eager to get away, but her limbs refused to sustain her. While she was seated there unwillingly in Mr. Scrimgeour's own chair, regaining her composure, there was a sound outside of some one rushing upstairs three steps at a time—then a little commotion in the outer office, and finally the door of the room was pushed open, and somebody dashed in.

"Are you Mr. Johnston?" said an eager voice; "are you the cashier?" All the mists that had been gathering about her seemed to roll into one cloud, and obliterate everything from Mrs. Cameron's sight. Then she slowly emerged out of the darkness, and saw standing before her the active young figure of Mansfield flushed with haste.

"One moment," he said, lowering his voice. "Here's something from John Cameron—something that—he said you would understand what it was. I hope to heaven I am not too late." Then he gave a sudden exclamation, pulled his hat off his head hurriedly, and turned, with a crimson countenance, and a look of utter discomfiture and confusion, to where John Cameron's mother sat, looking in her misery, as the mists cleared off and she saw him, like a severe and majestic old queen. She was perfectly pale; she held herself up as if at a state ceremonial, and she spoke not a word, which made her state more imposing still. "I—beg your pardon," he said, confused. "I—had no idea—I should find—any one here."

Mrs. Cameron could not make any reply. She was worn out with fatigue, and watching, and excitement, and neither understood why he was here nor what he had come to do. Johnston, with equal surprise, and a little reluctance, took the packet which the young man held out to him. He tore it open slowly, with a little tremulousness, not knowing what revelation might be in it. When he found two notes for the same sum which had just been given him by Mrs. Cameron he looked at them and at the bearer of them with consternation. It was some time before he could take in what it meant.

"These are—what are they? I don't understand," he said.

"Nor I," said Mansfield, half embarrassed, half haughty; "something which Cameron owed at the office. He said you would understand."

The cashier gazed with open-mouthed amazement at this double restitution. He looked at the notes on both sides, turning them over and over as if to make sure that they were genuine. "This cannot come," he said, "from the lad himself."

"If it comes from his friend, what does that matter—so long as you have it, and so long as I am in time? Am I in time?" Mansfield said. All this while Mrs. Cameron had been collecting her faculties, and began to regain possession of herself.

Johnston stood between the two, holding the bundle of soiled Scotch notes in one hand, and in the other those two crisp new ones, which seemed emblematic in the difference between them—the one payment wrung out of poverty, subtracted from the daily uses of honest living; the other costing no sacrifice, out of the superfluity of wealth. (He forgot that a young man living as Mansfield did has never any superfluity, and that those who gratify every fancy have as little to spare as the poor.) "It is nothing to this young ne'er-do-weel," he said to himself, "and it is a great deal to the old folk." But how to substitute the one for the other he did not know. The cashier was a good man, but he was not without a little simple guile. "Mrs. Cameron," he said, "this is a question for you and not for me. You have paid me the money, and here is this gentleman, whom maybe you do not know, but who is a friend of your son's, and he brings it too. What makes him put himself forward I know not. But I'm wanted in the office, and it's not a question for me to settle. I will leave you and him to talk it over. Anyway all will be right, and I am truly content."

With this he hurried away, not without an internal chuckle, leaving the two face to face. If Mansfield had been introduced into a lion's den he would have been less alarmed. He had acted on an impulse for good, as he acted often upon impulses for evil, but, as so often happens in such cases, the attempt at generosity brought instant punishment, while the sin in most cases succeeded. He stood before this old lady abashed and downcast, as he would not have stood before any judge. He did not know how to meet her eye. But she was not yet sufficiently roused to think upon any subject but one. A sense that he had incurred her displeasure—she could scarcely in her great trouble remember how—made her speak to him with a kind of solemnity; but that was partly due, at the same time, to the excitement and misery of her suspense.

"Sir," she said, reading his face with anxious eyes, and appealing to him with her hands, "there is one thing you will tell me. You have seen my son? Where is he? where is he? You will take pity upon a family worn out with trouble. Where is my John?"

"Mrs. Cameron, I will tell you everything I know. I have no idea where he is. I met him on the railway, going south, as they say here. He told me he had to leave, and that *this* was wanted at the office. He was in great distress. I will tell you the truth. I was ashamed to think I had perhaps helped him to spend it—and you, who had received me so kindly, so trustingly—I could not get it at once, but here it is. It is the least I can do, it is the least I can do: so long as I am not too late."

"Take back your money, Mr. Mansfield," she said. She stretched out her hand with the packet which Johnston had given her, but in her trembling, which she could not get the better of, it dropped from her fingers and fell on the carpet, where the notes lay, so valuable, so worthless, between them. "If you did this out of friendship, and to save John, I am grateful to you, very grateful; but we can do what is needed for our son ourselves, his father and me. If you did it for any other motive——" here she paused and looked at him, other recollections beginning to return to her. It was this he had been afraid of. If she were to question him on the other subject, call upon him, as parents have a right to do, for explanations, what might follow? He would have fled from her eyes if he had dared. But this was not what was in Mrs. Cameron's mind. She had liked the young man who had claimed her hospitality so simply, who had sat so often at her table, whom she had trusted, whom she had begun to love. Was it possible he could have intended to injure her or hers? And then he had hastened to the rescue of her boy. Her heart melted, her eyes softened, in spite of herself. "Have you anything else to say to me, Mr. Mansfield?" she said.

Now Mansfield was used to vulgar minds, and vulgar modes of cajoling and persuasion. When she melted thus he began to think she was like the rest. His awe of her lightened too. He was embarrassed still, but he began to recover his courage: yet in his confusion and self-consciousness he scarcely knew what were the words he stammered forth. "I would ask you—if I dared—to—remember me to the Captain: and to Miss Cameron," he said.

"To remember you!" Her face and her voice changed again. Though he was not looking at her, he knew this in a moment, and that he had been a pitiful fool to think anything else. He felt how she was looking at him now, though he dared not look up to see it, and felt himself the greatest cur in existence, hung up, as it were, a spectacle to earth and heaven, in the light of this old woman's eyes. "To remember you!" she said, "is that what you would have them to do?"

Never was there a triumphant deceiver more abashed and confounded. "Perhaps it would be better," he said, crushing his hat in his hands, "if I were to ask you—to bid them forget me, Mrs. Cameron."

"Ay, that would be better," she said sternly. "Sir, I will ask you one other thing. The last night you came to my house, was it with the knowledge that it *was* the last? Was your leaving settled, or was it sudden? Was it by your own will or other folks'? Did you know when you came in at my door, when you sat at my table, when my—family walked out with you to see you on your way, did you know it was for the last time? Answer me the truth. I have a right to that."

"I told them," he said, hanging his head, speaking low in self-contempt, in the shame of having such an answer thus extorted from him; "I told them—that I was asking them for the last time."

"For the last sail in your boat—and you meant it to be the last meeting, the last visit? Then that is true? Lad, what deevil possessed you?—but no, no, no, there's no deevil like a self-seeking man. Then that is true. And for half an hour's pleasure, for a brag maybe, to tickle your meeserable vanity—no other reason—you took the bloom out of a young life, and robbed my house that had taken ye in, and fed ye, and cherished ye——"

She had risen to her feet; her eyes were blazing in their worn old sockets, her lips quivering, her nostrils dilated; she lifted her arm with a free, bold gesture of passion like an orator. The young man before her quailed, he shrank backwards, and clasped his hands in appeal. "No, no, no; don't say that," he said; "don't say that!"

"Not that? what was it then? Do you think I want you back? If you were the first man in England you might ask me on your knees, but you should never join hands with bairn of mine. And yet you will take trouble and spend money to save the other! Was it to pay for the wanton harm you have done, to make up for the insult you have put upon us? Was that your meaning? You would pay us—my husband that has served his country, and me that have never turned a stranger from my door—for having profaned our house and betrayed our kindness; was that your meaning?" she said, in tremulous tones that seemed to echo round and round those bare walls unaccustomed to passion. For these minutes Mansfield had his fill of the keen sensation he loved, but it was not sensation of a delightful kind.

"You do me wrong, you do me wrong," he cried. "If I have done harm, I am punished. But as for this, I meant nothing but to help one I had perhaps helped to go astray. I never thought it would reach your ears at all. I may have—forgotten myself: I may have—erred in words; but if I have done harm, I am punished."

"Punished—by an old woman's tongue; that will do you little harm, Mr. Mansfield. Take up your money,

and go your ways. I wish you no ill; there must be good in you as well as evil, or you would not have done this; but go! go! for I cannot bide the sight of you!" Mrs. Cameron said. She stood over him while he gathered up his money from the floor, and, scarlet with confusion and anger and shame, turned and stumbled out, scarcely knowing what he was doing. There was never a conquering hero more ignominiously dismissed. Though he had not allowed it, though he had said truly enough that he never expected it to reach their ears, yet the money for John had been in his own mind a sort of compensation for the wrong to Isabel; and now, instead of that good deed to set against the evil one, he had nothing but scorn and contempt, and what was almost worse, disgust. "I cannot bide the sight of you!" said with all the emphasis of which a Scotch voice is capable, and made all the worse by the fact that this strange compound of good and evil liked the old woman who spoke, the kind woman who had opened her house to him, the indignant mother who spurned him with an impatience as natural as her kindness. Never in his life had Mansfield felt so small, so petty, so poor a creature. This was not his feeling at all in ordinary cases. He knew that people liked him, and held by this more than by anything else. Even his vices had been treated with a certain respect; he had been begged with tears to abandon them or to make up for them, to clear himself, or to indemnify others; but never before had he and his compensations and his makings up been swept away as by the outstretched arm of this old lady, with loathing and contempt.

When he was gone Mrs. Cameron sat down again in Mr. Scrimgeour's chair. It was very quiet, though in the midst of all the Edinburgh noises; the high walls, the lofty roof, the retirement within the other office, where work was going on busily and little talk, the very bareness of the strange place, calmed her after all her emotion. She sat alone in the stillness, not thinking even, with anguish in her heart, but yet a sense of exhaustion which stilled even that. So far John was in safety; no man could say he was disgraced; but where was he? How was she to lie to her neighbours and say he was "not in his ordinary," as she had said that morning—not lying, yet meaning to deceive? But even that was a secondary matter. Where was he? wandering despairing over the face of the earth. Was he to vanish as Willie had vanished, never to come back again? Willie was her firstborn. She did not know where he was, in what quarter of the world, or if perhaps he had left this world for another. "If he is yet in the land of the living and in the place of hope," she said, when she prayed for him. Who could tell where he was? and now the youngest son, the last of the boys, had disappeared after him into the unknown. She sat musing painfully, yet without excitement, quieted, as a great climax of pain and excitement quiets for a little after the anguished soul, when Mr. Johnston came back. He was very curious, full of eagerness. Would she have had the good sense, he thought, to let that good-for-nothing pay? It would be well his part. It was he and such as he that had led poor John Cameron, not an ill laddie, never an ill laddie, off his feet. It would be all they could do, him and the like of him, to pay. He investigated the table anxiously to see if the money was still there.

"I expect Mr. Scrimgeour every minute," he said; "will you stay and see him, mem? If you will not stay and see him, I can let you out another way, not to go through among these young men. Be under no uneasiness," he said, lowering his voice, "about Mr. John. If Mr. Scrimgeour asks about his accounts, I'll be able to say they are all in order. There was one thing he had forgotten to enter, I'll say, but the money is all right, it is all right. I cannot tell you what a relief that is to my mind. I hope, Mrs. Cameron, if you will not be offended at my inquiring, I hope you've let that lad pay."

"Mr. Johnston, I hope I'm no hard," she said. "I sent him away with his siller faster than he came. How can I endure the sight of them that have injured my bairns? I wish them no harm, but I cannot bide the sight of them!" she cried.

The cashier was alarmed by her vehemence and agitation. "Can I see you to where you're staying?" he said, "or are you staying in the town? or maybe you are going back by the coach? My wife would be very glad to see you, Mrs. Cameron; or if I could walk as far as—any friends you may be staying with——"

Mrs. Cameron's pride was touched. "No," she said, "I thank you, I am quite able to take care of myself. I am going back with the coach at one o'clock. If anything more is needful, or if Mr. Scrimgeour has anything to ask of us, we will rely upon you to let us know."

"That I will, that I will," Johnston said. He was relieved that the incident was over, and to see her rise from the chair in which he had been afraid she might faint or even die. With her over-fastidiousness and regard for fact, he was glad she should not meet Mr. Scrimgeour, and perhaps enter upon compromising explanations. "But there will be nothing more to say," he added, leading her to the private door, with a look of simple pleasure in his own ingenuity, "there will be nothing, I have made it quite clear. The lads are all perfectly satisfied. I have said that I had reason to fear there was a touch of fever in it, and that he had to be kept very quiet; that was to prevent any of them going out to Wallyford, as they're capable of doing, to inquire after him; a touch of fever, and his head maybe just the least thing affected, and great need for quiet. You will mind that this is what I have said, Mrs. Cameron," he added, with again a little internal chuckle of satisfaction in his own cleverness, as he watched her go away; and for her part, John's mother could say nothing to the man who had been so good to him. There is no harder ingredient in such misfortunes than to hear all the well-intentioned, kindly-meaning things which our best friends say.

At the cross road the Captain was waiting to meet her, looking only half himself without the young figure beside him who was his constant companion out of doors. He shook his head in answer to the first eager look his wife gave him as the coach stopped to set her down. Nothing had happened: the wanderer had not come home. He took her arm as they turned up the lane, leaning upon her as she told her story. It was a pathetic sight to see the old people together, close clinging arm in arm, his old head bent over her, both faces so gray and anxious, full of trouble. Slowly they went along the dusty way, she recounting every word, every step of the progress, he listening with that earnest attention which only perfect unity gives. Just so they had gone through the long path of their life, with one intent, one meaning, one existence: now it was coming sadly to an end amid what clouds and troubles. In the midst of her own story Mrs. Cameron stopped suddenly to tell the Captain of Rob Bruce and his good fortune. "He has done so well that he is coming home, with a partnership and everything in his favour. He is to be in London or maybe Edinburgh—and oh, but the minister is proud! He can see nothing but sunshine in this world." Her heart was very sore—and she laughed aloud as with a mockery of herself.

"And well he deserves it," said the Captain, pressing her arm; "he was always a good lad, always at his work, eident day and night."

"And what do we deserve?" she said with a bitter moan, shaking her head mournfully. "Are we so ill, so ill, such bad folk, that we must have all the beatings of the storm?"

"Oh my dear, my dear! have patience," the Captain said.

"Have I not had patience—how many years, how many years since Willie sank out of our sight? Was

there ever a bonnier lad or a kinder?—aye ready to serve a neighbour, to give to a poor body, to help them that wanted help; and then there was Tom. He is safe, safe, in his grave, in the Lord's hand, I humbly hope, that has forgiven a' his shortcomings; and now my last lad, my Johnnie. O William, my man!—do you not call that more than our share, three out of six, besides the bairns that died in their innocence; do you no call that more than our share?"

The Captain could not speak at once; his voice was choked in his throat. The names of the lost boys had taken him by surprise. "My dear," he said, "I call nothing more than our share that God sends. And we are not dead yet," he added with a pathetic smile; "wait till you an' me are at the end. You forget one thing, that we have aye been two to bear it; and wait before you give your judgment, till you and me are at the end."

"That is just all the harder," said the poor woman, distracted. "I think if it was only myself, I could bear it better; but you, William, that have brought up your bairns to serve God; and this is all, this is all that has come of it! If it were but myself, I might think I had made mistakes and done ill when I meant to do well, and that it was my blame. But you, that you should have no better return!"

"My dear," said the Captain, "you're wearied out, and your heart's sick with pain and trouble. You have not slept and you have not eaten. Na, na, do not turn away as if that was nothing. You will come home and take Christian rest, and thank the Lord that no man can point a finger at your son. And then we will wait till he comes back. I have a great confidence that he will come back, and soon—and soon! And do you know, my dear," the old Captain said, leaning upon her and drawing her arm close to his side, with a smile of tender humour, "that you speak as if you would have been better pleased to be without me. That's an ill compliment to an old man."

And he too laughed softly, with tender love and sorrow, with sad amusement at his innocent jest, and the wild impossibility of the suggestion he had made. Thus the old pair went home, where Isabel was on the watch. She was standing by the gate as they came up the lane, the sun shining upon her pretty hair. Her young face was worn and sad, and her father's laugh brought a look of bewildered surprise into Isabel's face. It did not seem to her that there was anything left upon earth which could tempt her to a smile. The old Captain put his hand upon her shoulder as he came up to the gate.

"My bonnie darlin'," he said, "here's your mother home again safe and sound, and all her business well accomplished, and some news of your brother; if not what we want, at least better than we might have expected. We cannot live like this with the tear ready to rise day and night; nor yet for ever on the watch with our hearts in our mouth: I am a man that must have a smile in my house, Isabel."

The girl stood looking at him vaguely for a moment, then threw herself upon his breast and burst into a flood of youthful tears. "And so you shall, and so you shall, papa!" she cried.

"And, my bonnie woman," said the old Captain turning to his old wife, whose hand he held, "we have had many a good day as well as many a sore day together. You'll not tell me that you could bear this or anything that is sent to you better by yourself than with me by your side. You'll not say that again, my dear, for it's no true."

"God forgive me!" cried Mrs. Cameron. "It's no true; it's more false than anything that ever was put into words. What would I do without you, my old man?"

"You will do without me when it's God's will—but no a moment sooner," he said—"no a moment sooner," with his soft laugh that was full of tears.

"And if you please," said Marget, looking out from the door, "the dinner's on the table. It's been ready this half-hour. Whatever may have gaen wrang (I'm no asking; after thirty years' service it's no my place to ask)—whatever, I'm saying, may have gaen wrang, it can do nae guid to waste haillsome meat."

It was not till the evening of this exciting day that anything was said to Isabel about her mother's encounter with Mansfield. Then it was the Captain that spoke. "You will be pleased to hear, Isabel, that our summer friend, yon English lad, had put himself out of the way to get that money to save your brother: I have asked your mother's leave to tell you. In her tenderness she had a terror of naming his name; but I know, my Isabel," the old man said, "you will be pleased to hear that."

Isabel was greatly startled and shaken. It was in the twilight, when they were sitting together, saying little. Mrs. Cameron, much against her will, had been made to lie down upon the little sofa in the corner. She was within hearing, yet it was possible that she did not hear. Isabel had listened but languidly at first, then had been startled into intense interest. She was so taken by surprise that it took away her breath and her self-command. There was a pause during which it was all that she could do to struggle with the convulsive sobs that began to heave her breast, and when she spoke at last it was to say only, with catching breath, "That was not like a summer friend—that was not like a summer friend."

"It is a mystery, my darlin'. Every man is a mystery; there is good in him and ill, and God knows which will come uppermost at any moment. Isabel, you may think it was some chance that took the lad away. My darlin', it was not so. His going was all planned and fixed for the morning after yon sail of ours; that was his meaning all the time."

But no answer came to him out of the veiling dusk. Isabel sat still, with the darkness round, and fought out her battle. Her father and her mother were by, but they could give her no aid. She had entered upon her inheritance, heir to all those submissions, those renunciations, that brave human stand against all betrayal, falsehood, and treachery, all disenchantment and disappointment, which are the tests to which a noble soul responds. Her time had come to show herself what she was, though she was only eighteen, no more.

"What is wrong?" said Marget to Simon as she gathered the kitchen fire. "Ye can go to your bed and never fash your head. When your heart's in it, you dinna ask what's wrang, you divine. But you never were good at that, my lad," she added relenting. "This is what's wrang, a's wrang: Maister John away, naebody kens where, gane, God forgive him, like his brother before him. Oh weel I mind, weel I mind! does the like of me need to ask, that has been through it all? The light in the window where every wanderer could see it, as far, as far as light will carry—that used to be aye kept up for years, as you might mind as well as me if you took any notice. And now it's a' begun over again. I've made the mistress promise to go to her bed and let me watch. And that's what you'll just do tae, Simon, my man: go to your bed. No able to stand it—me! Do you think I'm naething but blood and bane like yoursel? I'll stand that, ay, and twenty times mair. But gang you to your bed, Simon, my man; that's the best place for ye. You'll do yoursel good there, and biding up would do nae good to any mortal. And you ken there's the petawties to think of," Marget said.

"That's true, that's true. It's no the moment neither to neglect the petawties," Simon said.

To be concluded.

There will come a time when three words uttered with charity and meekness shall receive a far more blessed reward than three thousand volumes written with disdainful sharpness of wit. But the manner of men's writings must not alienate our hearts from the truth, if it appear they have the truth.—*Hooker.*

heart, whose springs the sense of God's great love has unlocked, or the eager zeal that burns for opportunities to testify its reality, or the self-forgetting generosity that deals with what it has, as feeling it to be a trust—all that may be very well for a Sabbath meditation, but they do not see its use in the hard battle of life. Oh, brethren! if there be any among you who have been measuring God's claims thus, and seeking in that way to win peace for yourselves, no wonder if you should be "carried about with every wind of doctrine," and know nothing yet of the joy of faith—the joy unutterable, that dwells in the heart of love. Nor will it be otherwise till the whole plan of your life has been changed, and "the work of the Lord" has been recognised and felt by you as the work of life also.

In the name of the living Father—of the gracious Master whose name you bear—I summon you to this work. Give Him real service as He requires. The opportunities are passing—passing swiftly. The dangers are thickening. The dread ordeal, dread only to the unfaithful, draweth nigh. "The night cometh when no man can work." Up and be doing. Take your place beside the brave and the true, who, in face of difficulty and trial, through good report and ill, are battling for the kingdom God's Son dwelt with men to establish; and "be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;" and "the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

WALLYFORD.

By Mrs. Oliphant.

Chapter XII.

IT is one thing to exercise patience and bear a stout heart in the midst of our troubles: but it is another thing to be happy, to open our windows to the sunshine, and our doors to the soft footsteps of peace waiting to come in. The household at Wallyford made a brave struggle. After the night of her mother's return Isabel, aided by a natural indignation, and still more by the great and overwhelming force of the family calamity, had put her dreams behind her, and did her best to forget the brief episode in which all her conscious life had seemed to be absorbed and concentrated. But even this scarcely furnished the smile which the old Captain had called for as necessary to his life. She smiled indeed with a heroic effort to please him in all things, but it was such a smile as moves the spectator not to gladness but tears. The Captain himself was arrested in the daily habits of his life. He went no more to the pier, which had been his daily amusement, but took his walk up and down the lane, trying to interest himself in the ripening of the corn and when it would be ready for the shearing. His heart was so fresh that after a day or two he began to take a real interest in this, and saw the golden colour creeping over the full ears with a sense of pleasure; but it was not like the pleasure with which he watched the sails as they skimmed over the Firth, and recognised "our own boats" on their way out or in, and watched, well-pleased, the man-o'-war in the offing. Sometimes with a sigh he would sniff the distant odour of the sea, and long for his old seat and a crack with Sandy at the pier; but Isabel was more to him than his favourite walk. And, though nobody knew what the story was, at the end of a week all the parish had found out that, as respected John Cameron, something was wrong. He had not passed the roadside cottages for two or three Saturdays; he had not been seen at the kirk. And signs of agitation soon became visible about the house itself. Even the fishwives noted that when they knocked at the door the mistress herself or Miss Eesabell would come with an anxious gaze, before Marget could get round from the kitchen. "Wha are they aye looking for?" the women said. They did not know, but they divined like Marget herself.

And as for Mrs. Cameron, not all her resolution, not all her desire to preserve her husband in that serenity which was congenial to him, and which sometimes seemed the only earthly anchor to hold by, and sometimes an aggravation unspeakable of all her griefs, could give composure to her anxious soul. When her husband adjured her to trust in God, she would answer, "Oh ay, oh ay, William, I trust in Him: but who can tell whether it may be His pleasure I should ever see my laddie again? I'm no rebelling. I'm no rebelling. If that's His pleasure, no doubt we'll submit, you and me; but you'll no say it's a happy thought."

"My dear," said the old Captain, "there is nothing for it but just to trust—He knows best—and to pray."

"Oh ay, William, oh ay," Mrs. Cameron repeated; "you have aye bidden me to be reasonable. If I thought the Lord did not know best I would have more comfort, I would weary Him day and night like yon woman in the Scriptures: and so I do! and so I do!" cried the poor mother; "but aye there comes this thought, and chills the very heart in my bosom. What if He that knows best should think it best that I never should see my laddie again? I'm no rebelling. I'll submit as we've aye submitted, but I canna be happy in it, William. If I thought He had no mind of His own, but would just be persuaded if I cried and cried, oh but I would cry day and night (and so I do! and so I do!), and I would get more comfort in it. But, seeing that the Lord knows best, how is He to be over-persuaded by me praying? It's *that* that makes my heart like lead in my breast."

"My dear," said the Captain, "it's true that you say; but, when all's done, it was Him Himsel' that told that story of the widow woman. And how can you help it but pray? You can speak of nothing else to me—your weak man, as helpless as yourself; and what could you say to the Lord but what's in your heart? I'm not supposing," he said with a smile, "that you're thinking of breaking with the Lord, and saying nothing to Him more; and how can you help it, my bonnie woman? You must speak of your bairn to Him, and that's praying; maybe He'll find some wonderful way of reconciling the two; but as for crying to Him night and day——"

"I canna help it. I canna help it!" she said; "but I'm no so heavenly minded as you, my old man. To think the Lord will just do for the best, whatever I say to Him, gives me a chill at my very heart."

The Captain shook his old white head, but what could he reply? At seventy-five, with his rheumatism and the stinging of his old wounds, and his heavy heart, it was all he could do to carry that white head high, and keep his heart fixed, not perhaps like him who stands fast, fearing no evil tidings; he feared them, but he did not fear to be overwhelmed by them. And then he was old, earth slipping from his uncertain feet, and the better country so near; all he could do was to soothe his old companion with his tender voice, and smile upon

her with his serene countenance, and talk to her of gentle, common, everyday things, though his heart was as full as hers of the one subject. While this was going on a miracle was happening between them which neither of them noted. Isabel, a fanciful girl, a child but yesterday, perhaps, if nothing had happpened, a narrowed, embittered, injured soul to-morrow, grew out of those swaddling bands of personal sorrow, and burst into life like a great majestic flower, like one of the noble lilies in the borders, lifting to heaven the best return for all its bounties, the breath of fragrance, the soul of beauty. She threw her little grief (which, after all, was not a little grief) behind her, like the husk of the blossom, with a half contempt, which yet was not contempt, for the pang which was only her own, and grew a woman in an hour. The father and the mother felt the new support and consolation, but they did not, absorbed in their sorrow, perceive what it was from which these blessings came. God worked this miracle for them all silently, and they did not find it out; their eyes being fixed upon that other miracle that all their prayers demanded, but which never came.

In this silence the days went on—how many of them, how few of them, all wrapped in one monotony of watching, no one could tell—though Mrs. Cameron kept an exact account, and would say to herself with anguish, "Another week, and no word! another day, and no word!" but the weeks were like years, and the interval one long, slow eternity, without beginning or end. There are few houses that do not know, in some measure, what suspense of this kind is. Perhaps it is for life or death, and no one can tell on what dreadful day the letter may arrive, or the telegram, saying that, among strangers far away, over land and sea, the uncertainty is over, and the boy will come back no more. But worst of all it is to know that somewhere, somewhere in the vast unknown of the world, wandering, sinning, suffering, there is one whose room is all decked and garnished, the chair put ready, the table spread, protection and forgiveness and love all waiting, but who does not come. "To serve and not to please, to wait and no one comes," say the Italians, are things that kill. This helplessness and impotence that make the soul sick, the horrible blank of not knowing, the groping to the east and to the west, the sense that when the wind blows and the storm rages, he, or still worse she, may be out in it whom we would shield with our very hearts: and when it is bitter cold may be exposed to it, and when it is night may be stumbling somewhere in the dark, far from light or shelter. Why should I dwell upon it? half the world knows something of that vigil. The worst of it at Wallyford was that it was all a repetition, and had been gone over before, and faded into use and wont, so that for years every unusual sound at night had seemed to be Willie coming home. Willie had become a forgotten word while the younger ones grew up, except in his parents' hearts, but in this renewal of anguish they could talk of him again. Was he living? or was he dead? no one could tell.

It may be thought strange that in all this trouble no special appeal had been made to Charley in Glasgow, who was so well-doing and gave no anxiety to any one. He had been told of it, of course, by letter, and he was very sorry, and glad that his father and mother had taken such summary measures "to save his character." "He will have no money," Charley wrote, "and no doubt you will hear from him soon." It is not an unusual addition to the trouble of highly sensitive people that there should be a cuckoo's egg among their brood, a stolid and steady-going soul to whom their feelings are foolishness, and who puts them down summarily as exaggerated and theatrical. The prosperous Camerons were both of this type. "If my mother would but let the boys alone, they would do quite well," Agnes said, who was out in India, and thought herself a great deal more experienced than her parents. And Charley was also of opinion that it was a great pity his father and mother could not take things as they came. "He'll soon come home if you just leave him to himself," Charley wrote, quite satisfied that he had said all that could have been required of him. And the Captain would laugh at this, seeing the humour of it, and bidding his wife not seek for a silk purse—"where it was not to be found," he would end with a smile, not to be severe. Mrs. Cameron did not see the joke, but this was how it was that Charley was not further referred to. He had a great respect for the old people, but there were many occasions on which they might show more sense, and take what happened much more composedly, he thought, at their age.

And so the days went on. Mrs. Cameron, who had been a comely woman with a matronly fulness when this story began, changed in her aspect week by week. The softness of her countenance wore away. She grew thin and haggard, with anxious eyes interrogating everything—the empty road, and the vacant rooms, and every face that came before her. There is a description in Wordsworth's "Excursion" (which people are forgetting nowadays), of a long waiting and watching like this, such, I think, as never was put into human words before or since. It is of a woman whose husband has enlisted and left her, and of whom she knows nothing, if he is living or dead.

"I have heard
That in yon arbour oftentimes she sate
Alone through half the vacant Sabbath day,
And if a dog passed by, she still would quit
The shade and look abroad. On this old bench
For hours she sat: and evermore her eye
Was busy in the distance, shaping things
That made her heart beat quick. For on that path
Now faint, the grass has crept o'er its gray line,
There to and fro she paced through many a day.

* * * * *

And by yon gate
That bars the traveller's road she often stood,
And when a stranger horseman came, the latch
Would lift, and in his face look wistfully."

This was how Mrs. Cameron lived. She would go to the gate a hundred times in a day, and rise from her bed a hundred times in the night, to steal to the window where her light was burning and gaze out into the dark, or into the starlight, for somebody that might be coming; but nobody ever came.

The autumn was coming on and the days growing short, when one Saturday evening, when all was quiet, the gate was heard to open with that familiar click, and steps sounded on the gravel outside. Mrs. Cameron was lying on the sofa, where they made her rest in spite of herself, waiting till Marget and Simon came upstairs to prayers. She would have flung herself off the sofa to go to the staircase window with that spring of hope which always inspired her at every new sound, though it was hope that was almost despair. "No, no, it's a heavy foot and an old foot; I know it's not him," she said, as Isabel knelt by her side, imploring her to keep still. "I know it's not him," but it was always possible that it might be John, however unlikely, and they all listened with indescribable anxiety, while Marget was heard coming upstairs.

"It's just nothing," Marget said, as well aware as any of the others of the agitation with which she was awaited. "It's one that would speak to the Captain: it's some of the Kirk-Session business," she added vaguely, "or about the schules. It's nothing, mistress, nothing."

"To speak to *me*!" the old Captain said. He thought that there was something more in Marget's eye. He got up from his chair with nervous haste, and shuffled away unsteadily. "Ah!" he said as he went out, "if it's Kirk-Session business, I know what it will be." All this, however, did not satisfy his wife. She called

to Marget almost sternly, as the woman was hurrying downstairs.

"You said one—who was the one? If it is business about the Kirk-Session, there is nobody in the parish but what you can name." When it was thus put to her, Marget faltered and put herself at once in the wrong.

"I never thought you would have that curiosity, mem, and you no weel," she said.

"Curiosity!" Mrs. Cameron cried; "woman, who is it?"

"Oh, mamma, what does it matter, so long as it is not him?"

"I *will* know," her mother cried, a flush of excitement coming over her pale face.

"Then, mem, if you will know, though I never thought you had that curiosity, it's just the minister; but he said I was to say it was nothing," Marget replied.

This information excited Mrs. Cameron painfully. She sat upright, repulsing Isabel with her trembling hands. "It is something about my boy—it is something about my bonnie lad. He has gone distracted with his trouble—he is dead, and the minister—the minister! he that all's well with, that all's well with!—that has never fallen under the hand of God—it's he that must come to break the news to my man and me!"

"Oh, mistress," cried Marget, with streaming eyes, "what way will ye aye meet sorrow half-way? He said it was nothing, nothing—that it was the Captain he wanted about business."

"Mother, be still, be still," cried Isabel. "I will go and bring them here."

The two men were sitting in the little room downstairs when Isabel burst in upon them. "Whatever it is, come and tell it before my mother, or you will kill her," she cried breathless. But even in the miserable suspense of the moment Isabel had caught a glimpse of the minister's beaming countenance, lighted up by that little inquisitive spectator candle, which seemed to pry into everything. She ran upstairs again, leaving them to follow, scarcely touching the ground as she flew. "If it is news, it is good news," she cried.

And so it was. The minister had two things to do. He had first to celebrate the praises of his son Rob, and make it evident that no young man before had ever been so prosperous, or deserved his prosperity so well; and second, he had to tell them of their son, who was, alas! not such an example. Rob, who had been for some time in London, had met John by accident in the streets. He had heard (but this Mr. Bruce slurred over) that all was not well with his old friend, and in spite of John's resistance, had insisted upon following him to a miserable lodging—but this, also, to do the good minister justice, he touched upon very lightly too. But when he told how Rob had taken possession of the prodigal, how he had refused to let him go, how he had heard from him all his story ("which he has not repeated to me," Mr. Bruce said), and had comforted him, and finally taken him into the office, and become his "caution," and answered for him to his partners, he did not feel it necessary to be reticent. He sat by Mrs. Cameron's sofa, and told his tale with glistening eyes; while she listened with suppressed sobs of joy and pain, and humiliation and thankfulness, all in one. The old Captain sat on the other side, with his head a little bowed, and his eyes fixed upon the bearer of good tidings. They were all absorbed in their own tale—he telling, they listening; but yet the interest was different. An indifferent spectator hearing the story, seeing the little group so deeply intent, the illuminated countenance of the narrator, the intense and breathless interest of the listeners, would have thought it was young Rob Bruce who was the hero; and so he was to his proud and happy father. The others listened, shedding salt tears, pursuing the humbled secondary figure through the narrative with pangs of love and sorrow, and joy and shame. Mrs. Cameron was a proud woman. She had thought that all she wished for in the world was to hear of her boy's safety, even to know where he was, much more to know that he was safe and in friendly hands; what more happiness did she want? But yet when she saw John's humbled position, his dependent lost figure gathered out of the depths by the other, the triumphant happy youth of whom his father was so proud, there was a keen pang in her thankfulness, and her joy was sharp with pain. The Captain felt it too, but with a sweeter and readier submission, a more tender gratitude. And as for the minister, he flowed forth with words that never tired. "My Robin would not let him go. Rob, you see, was determined, will-he nill-he, not to let him go. Rob had just got into his chambers, very nice rooms, as he describes them to me. He can afford himself that gratification. He is not a lad to waste his money, but he likes things nice about him. He took poor John home with him. You may be sure he's well looked after, Mrs. Cameron, well taken care of, when he's with my Robbie. I used to say he took care of me as well as any woman; and from the respect he has always had for this family," the minister said, with a glance at Isabel, "you may be sure he will spare no pains, and take every trouble. He would not be Robin Bruce if he did not do that," the proud father cried.

He was a true messenger of good news that night. He brought them hope, he brought them life; he restored them from the brink of despair; but they were scarcely more thankful for his coming than they were for his going away. It was Isabel who attended him to the door, after the custom of their old-fashioned politeness, which would let no visitor go through their house unaccompanied, and in the fulness of his heart he held her hand in his when he said good-night. "My dear," Mr. Bruce said, "you'll know that you did not count for nothing in all that Rob has done." Then Isabel, too, felt that the joy of finding her brother that was lost was not a happiness without alloy.

But all these sentiments melted away when they were left alone together and could say to each other that John was safe. He was safe, however it had come about: in friendly keeping, in honest hands, in the way of doing well again. Was it possible? Could it be possible? Mrs. Cameron lay back on her pillows, with tears of relief and gladness bedewing her pale face. The wind might blow to-night, what would it matter? "Oh, what am I minding about the rain?" she said; "my laddie will be under a kindly roof."

"But the minister, honest man, will just be dreeping before he gets hame," said Marget, who had come up to hear the news, and stood weeping openly with simple joy.

Next day, which was Sunday, Mrs. Cameron was the only one who did not go to church. She was too feeble to venture upon the long walk; but when Isabel had placed her mother comfortably on the sofa, and put her Bible by her, and one or two favourite books, the others left her, issuing out solemnly, like a little procession, Marget and Simon first, the Captain and his daughter after. Marget turned back again, however, to lock the door, as she always did, putting the key, as she had done for more years than she could count, at the root of the great white rose-bush. "If anybody comes that kens the place, they will ken where to find it," she said; "and I'll no have the mistress troubled with ony gangrel bodies. She kens now that yon misfortunate laddie will never come hame the day."

"It's aye them that's no expectit that comes," said Simon oracularly; but he was bidden to hold his peace, and did so, and carried the big psalm-book with the large print that his wife loved, to the kirk, as a good husband should. The bells were ringing softly far away when the party set out. The sound came floating over the fields through the hazy, mellow October morning to Mrs. Cameron's ear. Perfect stillness and peace were in the house. A little fire, more for ornament and "company" than use, burned in the grate, and the west window

was open, letting in a soft little breeze, which, though there had been already a few early frosts, was caressing and summerlike still. Mrs. Cameron lay back on her pillows and read her Bible, and stopped every moment to make her thanks to God. "I was a thankless woman —oh, I was a hard-hearted woman. I deserved no grace, but I have gotten it," she murmured to herself. Then she would turn to the Psalms, which she knew by heart, and repeat them aloud. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people." "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler." "I will lift mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." Then she would fold her hands upon her book, and be silent even from prayer, feeling that presence of God all about her, that great companionship, that sacred sympathy, which is the climax of religious feeling. And she was so stilled, so calmed, so reconciled with all things in heaven and earth, that she was not even aware of certain subdued sounds without, which yesterday would have driven her wild with expectation, with hope, and fear.

It might have been about noon, when Mr. Bruce had got to the second head of his discourse—for he was old-fashioned and systematic, and sometimes got as far as a sixth head—that some one who had been wandering about the fields for some time, and had seen the family leave the house, drew near with steps that were almost stealthy. He was a man who was no longer young, though perhaps it might be less by time than by care that his face was worn. He had a vigorous beard, a sunburnt countenance, and an active, well-knit frame. He stood behind a tree to see the family go by; and started a little when he saw the Captain and Isabel, and looked round as if for some one else; after that he wandered about, round and round Wallyford, making circles about the spot like a bird before it lights upon its nest. He went in to the garden, not by the gate, but by a low part of the wall behind the house, where there were marks, half-obliterated, of ancient climbings. He stood and looked at them with a smile just showing under his beard, and then strayed through the garden, along all the narrow paths, as if he knew them by heart. At last, always half stealthily, with cautious steps, he came round to the door. It was locked and all the windows closed, and not a sign of life about. Ettrick, the old collie, was absent, taking his usual Sunday walk; Marget's big black cat sat in the sun on the window-sill of the little room, but she took no notice of him. He stood and looked at the house up and down, gazing at the windows which twinkled in the ruddy light of the sun. His face grew paler as he looked, and the corners of his mouth drooped. He shook his head as if assuring himself that nobody had been left at home. No, no, nobody had been left at home, the whole family had gone to church as usual, master and servants. And were these all? were these all? Then a sudden thought seemed to seize him. He stooped down and put his hand under a certain branch of the white rose-tree. When he drew forth the key, a gleam of laughter passed over his face, but it sobered again, as very softly he opened the well-known door. It was with a very grave countenance that he went into the dining-parlour with all its little quaint windows, its low roof, the old sideboard with the silver cup upon it which once had been presented to Captain Cameron, the old garde-de-vin underneath. Here he stood for a long time, scarcely moving, looking wistfully at everything. How many things came to his mind! He seemed to have forgotten nothing, though all had grown so small, so dark, so brown with age.

It was when the stranger came out of this room, and his foot struck with a little jar upon the inequality of the floor, that Mrs. Cameron was first roused to think that she heard something in the house—something, it might be nothing, only one of those strange perpetual sounds which arise in the silence. Twenty-four hours ago it would have roused her into excitement. Now, she said to herself it was nothing; and then, for a long time, all was still. She relapsed again into that quiet mood which was so sweet after all the agitations of the past, that mood in which she could lie still and think of God without assailing Him and battering, as it were, the door of heaven with poor tremulous outcries, repetitions, never-ending, of agonised prayer. Perfectly still, her old heart and the old house, that were so like each other. Surely there never was such a Sunday morning, so still, so sweet, so full of peace.

When all at once there fell another sound into the stillness, the sound of a door opening, then closed—the door which shut off the kitchen and all Marget's department, a door which lately had been much left open, the old rule about it neglected. Perhaps the wind might have done this, but she opened her eyes wide and listened, as if that made her ears more acute, as some short-sighted people listening intently will put up their glasses, as if that added something to their power of hearing. And this time there could be no longer any doubt. There was a sound of a step upon the flagged passage, and then nearer, more alarming, of some one coming slowly upstairs.

Mrs. Cameron's heart leaped up to her throat, her pulses began to throb, her mouth grew dry. John! she had no feeling that it was John. It was some one who had come in with precaution, noiselessly, which he would never have done. He would have known she was there, waiting to take him into her arms. She sat upright upon her couch, putting her feet to the ground, but trembling so much that she did not attempt to stand. Slowly, steadily the step came upstairs, with a certain reluctance in it: not a step she knew. Would it be a stranger who had stolen into the peaceful house? perhaps one of the tramps she had always been afraid of: perhaps John—oh, no, no! He was safe in London, safe, and better there than here, out of temptation, out of suspicion. It came up, up, softly, slowly, like fate approaching. The veins seemed bursting in her head. Her heart leaped as if it would escape out of her breast. Whatever this was, she could not escape, being too weak and tremulous even to stand up, much less to fly.

And then, slowly, as if at the touch of doom, the door opened to the wall.

Who was it? Not a tramp, not a robber, far from that. A man with a serious face, a lip that trembled under his beard, whose eyes went first to the fire and the Captain's chair standing by it, before they found her out at the other side of the room, eyes with a smile in them, and a tear, and tender thoughts. When they reached her sitting there trembling, leaning forward, her heart sounding with a wild independent life, as if there were two of them, it and she—when he saw her, I say, an instantaneous change came over the man's face, a light seemed to flash all over it; he flung himself into the room, at her feet, with a great cry.

What was it? O God of the wanderer! O Father in heaven! what was it? Her heart stopped beating, so she thought, and she alone was left to fathom what it meant. For it was not John; it was a stranger whom she did not know; and yet what he cried was "Mother! mother!" For a moment she seemed to waver on the line which parts the shock of wonder and joy from the shock of madness. She put her hands upon his shoulders and pushed him from her. Then, with a shriek that rang through the house, and reached the ears of the household band coming back over the peaceful fields, she cried out, "It is Willie! is it Willie?" and fell back knowing no more.

"You may not think muckle of my man," Marget said in the afternoon, when all was quiet, the mistress restored, though weak, and the new occurrence understood; "he's no a man of many words: but I canna but think upon the last he said as we gaed out of the house this blessed morning. 'Them that comes is them that's no expectit,' Simon said. He's no a man of mony words, but the judgment of him when he likes to pit it forth! It's no

so often that he pits it forth, that's true. It would be ower great an effort." But this was probably said because Simon came in at the moment, and his wife did not think it good for his character to praise him too much to his face.

Wallyford had seen many changes first and last, but never anything like that strange day. Willie Cameron had thought his mother dead when he saw the little party pass to church, and her absence had pierced his heart with that poignant sense of the irreparable which death brings with it. He had come home to make up for his old follies, but here, he thought, was something which never could be made up. When he found her still in her own room, in her own place, to hear his story, and give the pardon which had come so long before he asked it, his heart was more utterly touched than it had been, even by the impulse that brought him home. It was strange beyond measure to the parents to meet this mature man, middle-aged, and more experienced in the world than themselves, in place of the reckless, idle youth whose wild ways had wrought them so much trouble. He had run through a strange career, had gone down to the very depths before perceiving further life in that aspect impossible, he had set his foot, as it were, against the bottom of the pit, and spurned it with one spring upwards. And then the way had been weary and long, with a hundred failures. It was not till within the last few years that he had fairly emerged into daylight, and had seen a chance of re-appearing in the other world where he was born. His story was like a book to the little audience that gathered round him, hanging on his lips. And Isabel, above all, was a wonder to Willie. "Is that my sister?" he said; "I cannot but think it is my little child, mother, the little girl I lost;" and thus he let them know that he had been married, and had wife and child both dead. They sat and wondered at him as he told his tale, the parents exchanging wondering looks, not able to believe that this was Willie. Perhaps it was a disappointment to them, after all. He was Willie, yet a man whom they did not know. When he lay down in his old little room that night, his mother, still so weak and tremulous, was shy of going in, with her candle in her hand, to see that all was right for him, as had always been her use. And it was a strange, trembling, wondering happiness that filled the agitated house.

When the two old people were alone together, the Captain took his wife's tremulous hand. "My bonnie woman," he said, "what did I tell you? to wait till you and me were at the end before we reproached our Maker. And now He's taken His revenge upon us for all our doubtings and our questionings, my dear."

"If you call that His revenge, William—but it was me that was of little faith, and no you, my old man."

"Ay, I call that His revenge—and like Himself—a double blessing," the old Captain said.

There is not much room to say more; what I could say, if I had space, is another matter: for every human story is but a beginning, opening up, if we could follow them, endless stories to come. How Willie Cameron settled down and was a good son at the end, yet never but impressed his mother as an older man than the Captain, older than herself even, though she was not of the light-hearted sort like her husband. How John, still the same John, though he had received so sharp a lesson, was skilfully pushed, and dragged, and warned, and threatened into comparative well-doing by that clever and prosperous young merchant, Rob Bruce, of whom his father never ceased to talk, and with good reason—until at last he was sent abroad, where he married, and fell in love with prosperity, and attained it in some measure. And how young Bruce, the prosperous and kind, came to Wallyford for his reward, and had such a fight for it as few lovers are brave enough to undertake, but conquered in the end, as a brave lover deserves to do. There are, at least, three other histories already indicated. But space and time fail me, and I cannot tell any more.

"The bairns were an awfu' bother," Marget says now, in the quiet of the old house; "they broke our hearts—the mistress's and mine; one would be ill in the body, and another would take to evil ways. And them that were without sin among them would be aye throwing stanes. We had a sair fight, what with this and what with that. But now they're a' out in the world, and settled for themselves and doing well; weel, I'm rael thankful, and so is the mistress; but it's a thought dull with so little to make ourselves unhappy about," Marget says.

The End.

A Covenanter's Grave.

By Rev. Thomas Nicol, B.D., Tolbooth, Edinburgh.

ON one of the wildest and most lonely moors in Galloway stands a granite monument erected to the memory of four of the martyrs of the Covenant. It rises to a height of thirty feet, an obelisk upon a base about ten feet square, and is built upon a hillock standing slightly above the surrounding moor. A few feet off, towards the bottom of the slope, nearly hidden by rough grass, is a freestone slab with skull and crossbones and the legend "*Memento mori*" on the back, and a clearly cut inscription on the front. The distinctness of the lettering is due to the pious efforts of Sir Walter Scott's "Old Mortality," whose home was for some years a few miles from this spot. He gave himself up to the task of repairing the Covenanters' gravestones in the churchyards and on the moors, where he might often be found disturbing the plover and the blackcock with the clink of his chisel and mallet. The inscription is as follows:—

Here lyes Robert Fergusson
who was surprised and instantly shot
to death on this place by Graham of
Claverhouse for his adherence
to Scotland's Reformatione Covenants
Nationall and Solemn league 1684.

The situation of this humble tombstone, and the story told by the inscription, are like many to be found in *the land of the Covenant*. It was a beautiful August day when we visited the spot. The hillocks and the undulating ridges of the moorland were bright with the pink-flowered heath, and the spaces between were clothed with luxuriant grass, and fragrant with bog myrtle. On one side the wide expanse of moor is bounded by heath-clad slopes that stretch away in miles of pastures covered with flocks. In another direction the hills stand up like walls, with masses of granite boulders, that seem to have fallen in avalanches, at their foot. Out upon the sides of these hills one might see goats leaping from crag to crag, and find the lair where the fox feeds her cubs upon vermin and game, and even lambs from the flock. There are no signs of cultivation visible, but around what had once been homesteads are groves of hazels and rowans sloping gently towards the winding stream which lines with an edge of silver the border of the moor. The two centuries that have elapsed since