THE LIVINGSTONES.

A STORY OF REAL LIFE

By Mrs. H. & E. Dalrymple

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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THE LIVINGSTONES.

CHAPTER I.

"As of the green leaves on a thick tree, some fall and some grow, so is the generation of flesh and blood."—ECCLESIASTICUS.

"Doth each day upon its wing
Its allotted burthen bring?
Load it not beside with sorrow,
Which belongeth to the morrow.
Strength is promised—strength is given
When the heart by God is riven;
But foredate the day of woe,
And alone thou bear'st the blow."

There are few sights more deeply moving than a soldier's funeral. I think all who
have witnessed one must have felt this; and although this may be in part owing to the comparative infrequency of the spectacle, yet I think much of the effect on our feelings is due to the force of contrast between all the bravery of the outward show, and the occasion that calls it forth. The ordinary trappings of woe—the hearse and mourning-coach, the plumes and hired mourners—convey only the idea of gloom; but there is something in the spectacle of soldiers bearing a comrade to the grave—the arms reversed—touching yet subdued token of manly sorrow, or the charger riderless, the useless sword and helmet, the muffled drum, the measured tread of many hundred feet, and, above all, the wail of that solemn music which sounds only for the dead—there is something in this which stirs the spirit to its depths. I may be told—and I know it—there is
oftentimes far more of real grief in the slender train that follows a little child's coffin, or among the mourners in the hired coach, than in all this pageantry. I speak only of its effect on a stranger. I, who have witnessed many, can never behold one unmoved.

These reflections are prompted by the remembrance of a young soldier's funeral which I witnessed some years ago. There was an unusually large attendance of officers, and I thought the faces of some of them betokened real grief. Meeting one of them the same evening, I asked him whose funeral had taken place that day.

"Do you not know?" said he; "it was poor Livingstone's, who was killed last week."

"Livingstone!" exclaimed I, "not John Livingstone? Impossible!—he is in Scotland."

"No, no," said my informant, "not one
of your Livingstones. Walter Livingstone, Lord Glenruth's son: no relation, I believe, but a very fine young fellow—an only son."

"An only son. Are his parents in London?"

"No; he begged Ned Armytage to go and break the news to his father and sister—his mother is dead—and to bring them up, but they were too late. It was all over sooner than even the doctors expected."

"How was he killed?"

"His horse put his foot on a loose stone, and rolled over him. He was hardly scratched, but his spine was broken. Poor fellow!" continued Captain Clavering, "I had spoken to him at the club not ten minutes before he fell, and he was brought back dying—that night he was dead. I
shall never forget it. We were all watching the doctor's face, and saw at once there was no hope. Poor Walter! what a favourite he was."

"What a terrible blow for his father and sister."

"Yes; Armytage says Lord Glenruth is quite heart-broken. Ned is terribly cut up about it himself. He was his greatest friend. He has gone to Scotland with the body."

I went home moralizing on the uncertainty of life, as we all do when we hear of such a case as this; and think, as Captain Clavering said, we shall never forget it; neither do we forget it perhaps; but we cease to think of it as likely to affect us. Each one returns to his business and his pleasure, as if he were exempt from the changes and chances of mortality.

Walter Livingstone's death was remem-
bered longer than such things often are by the crowd. He was, as Captain Clavering had said, a general favourite; and to see him dying, cut down in the glory of his youth, was a sight to awe and sadden the most unthinking spirit. That little stone in his horse's path was enough to check the current of life which flowed so seeming strong.

I thought much of the bereaved father and sister, and felt a great desire to hear more of them, which was afterwards gratified, as the following pages will inform you, courteous reader.

They left London the day of the funeral. Edward Armytage accompanied the remains of his friend on their last journey, and saw them laid to rest among the graves of his race; and when that was done he still lingered at Glenruth. He felt an intense desire to comfort the broken-hearted old
man and gentle girl, who had lost what was dearest to them on earth, and who evidently did find comfort in his deep and quiet sympathy. He was no stranger. Young Livingstone and he had been schoolfellows and chosen companions in boyhood and youth, and in happier days Edward had visited Glenruth with his friend, and knew all its wild beauties as well as Walter himself—perhaps appreciated them even more vividly.

So he lingered on, each day saying to himself that when he saw Lord Glenruth a little better he would go; but the poor old man, already an invalid, had received his death-blow, and although he exerted himself for his child’s sake, to struggle with his sorrow and subdue its outward manifestations, it did its work all the more surely on his wasted frame. Grace was not blinded,
she knew her father was dying, but she did not speak of it to any one; she had need of all the self-control—which she possessed in an eminent degree—no human being could help her to bear her grief; but she knew that He could who had lain it on her, and from Him alone she sought strength.

Grace Livingstone was no common character, and her training, very different from that of most girls, had developed all her good and noble qualities, so that at seventeen she had the wisdom and self-reliance of a thoughtful woman, with the simplicity of a child. To know herself, to find her happiness in seeking that of others, to live for the day, and let the morrow bear its own burthen, to enjoy thankfully every blessing given, but to reckon blindly neither on happiness or rest on earth; such were the lessons of a tender mother, whose death, when Grace was barely
twelve years old, grievous loss as it was; would have been more grievous still had she been, like most children of her age, incapable of remembering or acting upon them. But she bore them in her heart, and made them the rule of her life, the more implicitly, perhaps, that the voice which had so often and so earnestly enjoined them, was silenced for ever.

From her mother Grace inherited much strength of character, especially the power of endurance; but it might have been a passive endurance had not Lady Glenruth so well understood her temperament—rather grave than gay, excitable yet indolent—and applied the needful remedy to its defects.

"Remember," she would often say, "that Hope is the sister virtue of Faith and Love. Hope to the end, my child; cultivate a cheerful spirit; look trouble fairly in the face
when it is plain before you, but do not go to meet it. Trust in God."

After her mother's death Grace became the comfort and the idol of her father, who, with the tenderest heart, the most honourable and upright mind, and an intellect of the highest order, chastened by a devout faith, was yet not capable of having laid such a foundation.

His was the superfine organisation which so often accompanies genius; his health had suffered from severe wounds yet unhealed, and these combined to produce a degree of nervous excitability which made his spirits very unequal. But to raise on the foundation already laid a fair superstructure, he was eminently qualified.

His little daughter's education became his task and delight, and as she inherited his genius and love of learning, she soon became
a child of rare attainments; and ignorant though she might be of the world and its ways, her mind was stored with the wisdom of the past, and she looked on nature with a poet's and a painter's eye. From both parents she inherited humility and gentleness, and a loving, unselfish heart. Faults too she had inherited of course, but they had been so early pointed out to her, and she so humbly desired to know and combat them, that seldom indeed were they apparent to any one but herself and the Searcher of hearts.

Such a nature would have redeemed a plain face, but Grace was beautiful. Can it be wondered, then, that Edward Armytage loved her with all the passionate devotion of first love.

Did she love him? As the dearest friend of the beloved brother who was gone, almost
as her own brother now, he knew she did, not otherwise he thought, else would he not have lingered near her; for Edward Armytage was too poor to marry, and too honourable, under such circumstances, to seek a woman's love. Perhaps he had dreams, as all lovers have, of winning fame and fortune, to lay at her feet some day; but meanwhile he kept a strict watch over himself, and neither word nor look betrayed the secret that was hoarded in his heart. Besides, he thought humbly of himself, as the noblest natures always do, and deemed himself unworthy of one so good, so gifted, so beautiful.

And Grace, her heart preoccupied with care for her dying father, and the memory of her dead brother, thought not of Edward Armytage, save as the kindest of human beings, to whom her grateful affection was
frankly given. If she had given more she knew it not, for her calm, steadfast eyes sought his, as she thanked him again and again for all his goodness, and he felt that her heart was free, and he rejoiced. I call that unselfish love.

One evening he received a letter, which determined his fate. It was an offer from the newly-appointed Governor-General of India, to take him as one of his aides-de-camp. An immediate answer was required; and in case of acceptance, he was to join without delay. The decision was easily made, for to refuse such an offer would have been to throw away prospects, which might never open to him again. Yet he felt how gladly, if he might, he would have given up everything then to be near her in her hour of deepening sorrow, for he saw that Lord Glenruth’s days were numbered. His heart
filled, too, at the thought of leaving the kind old man, who seemed to have learned to look upon him with a father's affection, and never could bear to hear of his leaving Glenruth.

How should he prepare him for so sudden a departure; Grace must be told first, so he went in search of her.

She was sitting by her father, who had fallen asleep as she read to him; the lines which sorrow had channelled in his pale fine face seemed deeper, and even in sleep he sighed heavily. Grace's eyes were full of tears, but they did not overflow then. Poor Edward! this did not help him, but there was no escape.

"Will you speak with me on the terrace for a few minutes?" whispered he.

She rose quietly and followed him, but
with a face so sad—so sad and meek—he could hardly bear it.

"Come to the other end and sit on the bench; you look too tired to walk."

"I must not stay long," she said; "he is not well to-night."

"Do you think him worse? Shall we send for Dr. Baillie?"

"Oh, no; Dr. Baillie can do nothing now, he has told me so;" and she covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

How he longed—oh! how he longed—to take her in his arms, and kiss those dear weeping eyes; but he refrained, he dared not give way to his tenderness, he did not even take her hand; but he waited till she was calm again, and then he said quietly:

"You know I would do anything in
my power to be of use to you, yet I fear I shall have to leave you just when—"

He paused, for Grace started as if a spasm had gone through her. It was momentary; and then she looked inquiringly at him—it must be told at once.

"I have the offer of a staff appointment in India, and the letter must be answered by return of post. Here it is; will you read it?"

As her hand touched his in taking the letter, he felt that it was as cold as marble; it had not been so a few minutes before. Her colour went and came as she read the letter; but when she returned it to him, she said very quietly:

"Of course you will accept it, and we must tell him in the morning, you must go to-morrow."
"To-morrow, or the next day at latest, I fear; but if your father is startled by it, I will wait at any cost till I see him better."

Grace sighed.

"No, no, you must not risk your appointment, that would do him more harm than even your going; and indeed the worst that any shock can do him is to send him sooner to his rest—I ought to wish that, only I would like him to sleep quietly to-night. I must go back to him now, and you must go and answer the letter." She rose and held out her hand to him, "God bless you for all your kindness to us! we shall miss you sadly now."

He bent his head, and kissed the slender white hand: it was still icy cold, but she felt a hot tear fall on it. She went back to her father, he was still sleeping; and then she went to her own room, and locked the door.

As by a lightning flash she had been
shown her secret love, hidden till now from herself. How dear—how inexpressibly dear he was! and now they must part—oh! why must they part? Why must she have this new trial—must she lose him too? This was her first rebellious thought; but humbler, better feelings soon arose. She felt she was ungrateful, unthankful, selfish. Ought she not rather to rejoice at his good fortune instead of dwelling upon her own disappointment? ought she not to spare him the pain of seeing her sorrow?

It was with no chain of flowers that love bound that young innocent heart; yet even then would it have taken its freedom? No!

It never occurred to her then that she could possibly be as dear to Edward as he was to her, and thus the effort of each was to wear a mask before the other; not from pride, not from distrust, not even from maidenly reserve on her part, not from any
of the usual motives which prompt concealment, but because each would rather suffer silently than bring upon the other a shadow of pain;—yes, I call that unselfish love. Perhaps you will say a grain or two of selfishness would have served their purpose a great deal better.

Edward had watched her, with his soul in his eyes, while she read the letter, and as that spasm appeared to pass through her, a sympathetic thrill—was it wholly pain, or tinged with joy?—shot through his heart; but she spoke and looked so calmly, and her thoughts were evidently so full of her father, that he controlled the strong yearning which prompted him to speak, and speak the truth. "Why should I startle her with a confession of my love just now," thought he, "when she needs all her strength, and when I must leave her?"

And Grace said: "I must not let him see
how bitterly I feel this parting. It would grieve his kind heart."

So after a while, she went down stairs and made tea for him, and they talked of his prospects in India—of everything excepting that which filled both their hearts to overflowing.

It was a sleepless night with both, and Grace shrank from the task which was before her, of breaking the news to her father, whose extreme debility made it but too probable that any agitation might be fatal. She found him as he had been the night before, very low—the tears streaming down his face. When she came in, he tried to smile—but it was such a faint, heart-broken smile, more sad to see than tears. She sat down in her place at his feet, and began to read the Bible to him, as had been her daily custom for years. She read the breathings of the afflicted yet believing soul in the sublime
strains of the Psalmist; the compassionate call of the blessed Saviour to the weary and heavy laden. The divine words fell like balm on that bruised heart. They strengthened her own too, and after a few minutes passed in silent prayer, she began:—

"Dear father, you must come out on the terrace to-day. Edward Armytage would like to see you there again once more before he goes, and you know the fresh air always does you good."

"Before Edward Armytage goes? He is not thinking of leaving us yet, I hope."

"You know, dear father, he has been a long time with us; I am sure he would stay longer if he could; but he must go soon, it seems."

"He told me he had leave till October, and I thought by that time:—but when must he go?—how soon?"

"He got a letter yesterday requiring
him to go up to town immediately; he has the offer of some staff appointment, which you will be glad to hear; but he will tell you about it himself. Will you see him now or by-and-bye?"

"I will see him now;—stay, my darling; he looked very earnestly in his child's face, for he thought it was changed since yesterday? "Are you grieved at his going?"

"I am very sorry he must go, but that is selfishness, you know; and I was afraid it might distress you, dear father, to hear of it so suddenly, just at this time; but I knew you would be glad at his getting a good appointment; it makes amends for his having to go a little sooner. You know he must have gone before long."

Her voice and eye were so steady, even cheerful, that her father was quite deceived."

"I will go and send him to you now,"
she said; but before she ventured to meet Edward, she spent some minutes alone.

Meanwhile Lord Glenruth pondered what he had just heard, and his daughter's manner of communicating it; it gave rise to mingled feelings; and he was still in deep thought when Edward entered his room.

"This is sudden news for me, my dear boy: so you must leave us."

"I must, Lord Glenruth—I need hardly say how unwillingly; you know of the offer I have accepted."

"A staff appointment, Grace said; but gave me no particulars."

"It is to accompany Lord —— to India, as aide-de-camp. I could not feel justified in refusing such an offer. You know I have nothing to look to but my profession."

"India!" exclaimed Lord Glenruth. "I was not prepared for this: this is parting
indeed!" The poor old man was quite overcome, and for some minutes could not speak, and Edward knew not what to say next. At last, Lord Glenruth made a strong effort, and laying his hand on Edward's arm:

"My dear boy," said he, "I have been much to blame. I have been weak and self-indulgent. God forgive me! for the consolation—the great consolation of keeping you near me. I have overlooked the risk of your peace, and that of my precious child. Hers is safe. Mercifully I have ascertained that. Now, answer me faithfully: how is it with you?"

The young man's face spoke for him. He could not reply in words.

"I am answered," said Lord Glenruth, with a bitter sigh. "I have ill repaid the debt of kindness I owe you; but I am punished now for my selfish blindness."
"Lord Glenruth, do not say so; the blame, if there be any, rests with myself. It is true, she is dearer to me than all on earth besides; but I have loved her long—for years, and I have kept my secret."

"My poor boy!"

"Do not pity me. I would not have it otherwise, if I might. I am not unhappy—except that I can do nothing to serve her. I would give this up now if I could be of any real use to her; but you know how powerless one like me would be, with no title of relationship to protect her."

"Edward Armitage, if my child had been my heir, you should have had the best title to be her protector. If even I could have provided for her enough to keep you both from poverty, I should have died happy in leaving her with you; and
you might have won her love if you had allowed yourself to try. But I cannot bid you try now. You must keep your secret still, and leave her free as she is now. She will soon have enough to struggle with. My poor child!” He paused and then continued: “But if fortune ever favours you even with a little, remember what I have said this day, and that you have a father’s blessing,—for like a son you have been to me. I have no words to say what I think of your noble conduct. God Almighty bless you!”

He sank back exhausted; and Edward too deeply moved to speak, could only kiss the feeble hand that pressed his; and hearing Grace’s step in the passage, he rose hastily and left the room. He could not have met her there and kept his counsel.

She found her father less overpowered
by agitation than she could have ventured to expect; and thankfulness for this absorbed for the time every other feeling. On the whole, the interview with Edward, trying as it was, had relieved Lord Glenruth's mind of much that had weighed on it, since the idea of an attachment between him and Grace had first flashed upon him. To find that her heart was, as he believed, free, and that Edward's had been given so long ago, gave him much comfort; and he could now even rejoice in the idea of his going to India, as giving the opening which was, he felt, all that Edward needed to win his way to distinction, and then, at some future day perhaps, the father's dearest wish for his child might be realised. It was not so utterly miserable a day after all.

Sometimes sorrow, no less than joy, falls short of our expectations. We can never
tell, till we have drained it, how sweet or bitter the cup may be.

Grace and Edward were even now reaping the reward of their self-command. He in the approval of his own conscience, the affectionate feelings, the hope and courage which Lord Glenruth's words had awakened. She, more unconsciously, but not less really, by having spared her father's feelings, and, through his—her own. Surely they both deserved this mitigation—there was sorrow enough in store for them still.

The parting hour came on so quickly; and in spite of the self-compelled restraint which made their words and tones seem almost cold, each felt the other's presence as lingering sunshine, soon to be withdrawn. At last, it wants but half an hour of the time when the coach would pass the lodge; the farewell must be spoken.

He went into Lord Glenruth's room, and
when he came out his eyes were full of tears.

"Good by, dear Grace, God bless you!"

"God bless you, Edward!"

That was all they said.

A fervent grasp of the hands, and thus they parted—who loved each other better than life.

But he looked back when he reached the foot of the stair, and their eyes met.

Those traitorous eyes!—that look told all.

And thus were Faith and Hope joined to Love.
"Why, bastard? Wherefore base?"

"He was not born to shame.
Upon his brow shame is ashamed to sit."

"His years but young, but his experience old.
His head unmellowed—but his judgment ripe;
And, in a word, (for far behind his worth
Come all the praises that I now bestow,)
He is complete in feature and in mind,
With all good grace to grace a gentleman."

A few words touching Edward Armytage
before we lose sight of him in India.
His history was a strange and sad one.
The only son and heir of a rich Baronet he was just entering manhood, when by the discovery of his father's prior marriage—a Scotch marriage—not only were his prospects in life destroyed, but a stigma was cast upon his birth, which nothing could efface. His mother, a high-born and sensitive woman, sunk under her grief and shame; and his father, even more weak than vicious, died by his own hand, without making any provision for the son on whose head his sin had entailed such miserable consequences. Edward was left absolutely dependent on the bitter bounty of the unknown and brutal half-brother who had thrust him from his place.

But the very magnitude of his misfortune raised him up friends, which his singularly engaging character secured for ever. He had shown a noble constancy, courage, and moderation under very trying circum-
stances, his story awakened an interest in high quarters, and a commission in the Guards was offered him, which opened an honourable path to independence—perhaps to distinction—not such a career as seemed once his destiny, but such as he felt now exceeded his hopes. From his brother he would not accept the pittance grudgingly offered, and thus his commission and the few thousands which had been his mother's portion, was all he possessed.

But he had courage, constancy, ambition, energy, and talents of no common order. He is not one who will sink when he may swim. And he had a countenance which was sure to plead for him: his head was a study for the sculptor, and a triumph for the phrenologist; his form was a model of manly beauty—and beauty is such a good letter of introduction!

I have told in a few words a story which
might have furnished materials for a romance; but the circumstances were all antecedent to the period at which this tale commences, and I do not feel justified in retracing a quarter of a century.

This little chapter, however, will further explain why Edward Armytage kept his love a secret—why Lord Glenruth's kindness so powerfully affected him. It was not his poverty alone that sealed his lips. The bar sinister was to his high spirit a heavier burthen. The disgrace of a father, affectionate and beloved, was a more bitter grief.

But it could not crush so noble a nature, any more than the wealth and honours which he had lost could dignify the crafty and pitiful wretch who had inherited them, Which was really the base-born?
CHAPTER III.

"Towering o'er those beauteous woods,
Gigantic rocks were ever dimly seen,
Breaking with solemn grey the tremulous green,
And frowning far in castellated pride;
While hastening to the ocean, hoary floods
Sent up a thin and radiant mist between,
Softening the beauty that it could not hide."

WILSON.

Certainly there is a peculiar bitterness in the cup of sorrow, when the loss of the dearest of earthly friends involves the loss of the home sanctified by the memory of the dead—when we must part, not only from
them, but from every object with which they are associated, and go forth with an aching heart from the Eden of our youth into the wilderness of the busy world, to struggle through its briars and thorns when the spirit is yearning for rest. Perchance—

"To wear the smile of gladness,
When all within is cheerless, dark and cold:
When all earth's joys seem mockery and madness,
And life more tedious than a tale twice told."

What can bear the sufferer through the dark passage unless he can lean upon the unseen hand which is leading him lovingly, though it must needs be by a rough and stony path, onwards towards heaven's light.

Such was the trial which, a few weeks after the events already related, was pressing heavily on young Grace Livingstone. A week had not elapsed since her father's body was borne from the home which she—the
last of her race—was to quit on the morrow for ever. And she sat alone in the room where she had watched his precious life fading away, as now she watched the sun sinking behind the everlasting hills, and bade a silent, sorrowful farewell to the woods and waters of that happy valley where she had passed from infancy to womanhood.

The last sun-beams shone red through the boles of the old Scotch fir-trees which stood on a rising ground, lighted the broad river which swept down the valley, gilded the grey walls of the old Abbey of Ruth, and the yellow sands of the distant shore, and made every cottage window in the plain gleam like a tiny fire. Grace watched the ruddy glow expire, and the roseate after-light tinge earth and sky with its own tender hue; that, too, faded into pale clear twilight, and the outline of hill and forest rose dark against the sky. For a little space the blackness of night pre-
vailed; but presently the moon arose, and flooded the valley with silver light. Each change seemed lovelier than the last; but for Grace they chased each other all too swiftly. Fain would she have chained the flying moments of this last evening;—

"The last.
Oh! by that little word
How many thoughts are stirred,
That sister of the past."

As she gazed on the fair scene before her, it seemed to her as though her past and future life were shadowed forth in the changeful hues which had overspread the landscape.

She could hardly have given a reason for the fancy, save that, as the first light of her life, the joyous sunshine of youth, had set; so might the pale but lovely rose-tint of hope, which was even now stealing over her subdued spirit, depart also; and then how dark
and stern would life become under the deepening twilight and gathering night, how cold and joyless under the pale moon.

But she chid her faithless heart, for trembling at a dream and shrinking from its fate.

"Even be it so," she murmured half aloud, "the fountain of light is ever in the heavens, though there be darkness over the earth. It may be deep night when we lie down to sleep, but there is a brighter morning."

Then the thoughts of to-morrow's dawn rushed back upon her mind; she bowed her young head, and wept long and bitterly; but the tears relieved her full heart, and her grief found voice in prayer. She asked for patience and strength, and both were granted.

It is seldom that a young girl is left so utterly alone as Grace Livingstone was: she had no near relations. By the death of her brother, the inheritance of Glenruth passed to a very distant branch of the family.
Nor was he who was to take her father's place merely a stranger. He had shown himself to be a man of grasping and mercenary spirit, who, from the moment the succession opened to him, had betrayed a most unseemly and indelicate eagerness to assert his rights, and had rejected every proposal by which Lord Glenruth sought—without injuring him, already a wealthy man—to soften to his daughter the trying change of circumstances which he knew awaited her.

Walter's death appeared to have hastened his, but his health, as I have said, had been broken for years. Before that bereavement he had looked forward calmly to his departure; for he knew that the tenderest affection bound his children to each other, and that his inability to make a large provision for Grace mattered little, since Walter would more than fulfil his wishes in this respect. But all
these hopes were buried in his son's untimely grave.

Grace was too much absorbed in sorrow for the dead, and care for the dying, to bestow much heed on her own altered prospects. In fact, she was but imperfectly acquainted with the state of the case, and her poor father shrank from conversing with her upon so painful a theme. Shortly before his death he had made a will bequeathing to her everything in his power, and this, with the settlement already made upon her, he hoped would be sufficient to secure her independence. But to make up to her for the home which she soon must lose, was a more difficult matter. Death had removed almost every one on whom by near relationship he had a claim, those who remained were not altogether such as he would have chosen as her guardians; and he now regretted the spirit of self-indulgence which had led him,
since he lost his wife, so completely to renounce the society of those early friends, to whom he might now have confidently appealed in behalf of his child.

Her nearest relative—connexion rather—was the widow of her uncle, married to an English Baronet; to her Lord Glenruth wrote commending his daughter to her care, and having thus set his house in order, he died in peace.

So calmly—so quietly—that Grace, who was watching by his side as usual, knew not the moment when he passed from sleep to death.

When she marked the beautiful serenity of the face so sorrow-worn erewhile, she could but thank God who had called him to his rest.

The next week was one of severe trial to Grace, for many painful duties devolved upon her; not the least of these was that of
receiving the new Lord Glenruth, who lost no time in gratifying his vain and greedy spirit, by a survey of his long-coveted inheritance; and was at little pains to conceal the intense satisfaction he felt, although he excused his coming on the plea of wishing to show respect to the memory of the late Lord, by attending his funeral. Meanwhile, he gave orders to the servants in the tone of a master; spent the mornings in riding over the property, and the evenings in wandering from room to room, discussing with Mr. Oliphant, the factor, as to what was to be considered personal property; and finally intimated plainly to him, what he had more than once hinted to herself, that the sooner Miss Livingstone could make it convenient to quit Glenruth the better he should be pleased, as he had invited a party to spend Christmas with him, and wished to have the house to himself for some time beforehand, "to get
things into proper style," as he expressed it. It would be difficult to imagine anything more offensively vulgar and unfeeling than this man's behaviour; and as Grace watched the funeral slowly wending down the valley, she could not help feeling bitterly how ill the place of chief mourner besitted him, whose whole sordid soul was filled with pride and pleasure in his recent exaltation. There was not one of that sad company who did not carry a more real sorrow in his heart—for the late Lord Glenruth had the love and reverence of all who knew him.

The following day Grace was relieved of her kinsman's presence. He departed, reiterating his intention of returning within a fortnight; and she felt that, in truth, it were best the trial before her should be encountered as speedily as possible. She nerved herself, therefore, to the task of putting in order and disposing of the articles of personal property
which had now become hers. Some things, rather than remove them from their accustomed place, she relinquished to their present owner, though aware that her motive would neither be understood, nor appreciated; but there were others too precious to be thus abandoned—the pictures of her parents and brother, her father's favourite books, and, most sacred of all, the arm-chair in which he died, she left in trust with Dr. Graham, the clergyman of St. Ruth's, to be redeemed at some happier day, when perhaps she might have another home.

Then came the farewell visits to all the cottages around, among which, from her very childhood, she had ever gone about doing good; to her schools; to good Dr. Graham, her father's friend and her own; and to poor old Mrs. Hay, the invalid widow, whose greatest earthly happiness had been the sight of Grace's sweet face, and the sound of her
gentle voice, for she had outlived all that makes this world a lovely and pleasant place; and when Grace turned to leave her, she was tempted to pray, as she had done when she was made childless, that she might be taken where there was no more sorrow or parting.

It was after a day spent in bidding farewell to these poor friends—the only friends she had—that she sat watching the flush and fading of the evening light. When tears had eased her bursting heart, and she had poured forth her sorrow and her weakness to her God, she was comforted; and when she laid her head for the last time on the pillow where it had rested in her happy childhood, her slumbers were calm as then.

It was very early when she passed, for the last time, under the old gateway of Glenruth—very early, yet the court was filled with those who had gathered there to bid "God speed"
to their beloved young mistress, with tears and murmured blessings. She tried to thank them, but her voice was choked. Hastening through the court, she was soon in the carriage, and had lost sight of the castle. She did not stop or look back till she had passed through the lodge-gates, but as the carriage slowly ascended a rising ground whose crest commanded the valley, she alighted to look her last upon that lovely landscape.

Most lovely indeed! Midway up the valley rose the grey towers of Glenruth, mantled with ivy and the crimson foliage of the Canadian vine. It was a well-preserved specimen of feudal architecture which had been added to at various periods, and although convenience rather than unity of plan had been consulted, the general effect of the irregular pile was strikingly picturesque.

The situation was commanding. The western turret overhung the river so com-
pletely, that from it one might drop a stone into the dark waters which rolled beneath; but from the south and east, the ascent was more gradual. Behind rose masses of wood, broken by rock and moorland, and in the distance an encircling chain of bold crested hills shut in the beautiful valley. Southwards, lay the sea, with several miles of flat country intervening—which greatly enhanced, as it always does, the beauty of such a landscape—through which the river held its eastward course until it lost itself in the waters of the bay.

Grace's wistful, lingering gaze rested lovingly—oh! how lovingly!—on castle, stream, and tree; but now the carriage was rapidly descending into a hollow, and soon all was hid from her eyes save the purple hills, which, to her childhood's vision, had seemed the boundary of the world. That boundary she was now to pass.
CHAPTER IV.

"Beware of the smiling enemy that openly sheatheth his weapon,
But mingles poison in secret with the sacred salt of hospitality."

PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY.

ASHBY HALL, in Warwickshire, was Grace's destination.

Lady Markham had been the widow of Lord Glenruth's younger brother, the Hon. Lewis Lindsay. Since her second marriage there had been little intercourse between the families—not from any coolness consequent upon that event, for Lady Glenruth had written to her sister-in-law most kindly on the occasion, and Sir Ralph and Lady Markham had once or twice visited Glenruth, but
there was little congeniality between the fox-hunting baronet and the accomplished man of letters, as there was between the high-minded Lady Glenruth and the manoeuvring woman of the world—so they went their several ways, and seldom met.

Still, as Lady Markham's letters always contained expressions of affection, and as she had claimed the interest of an aunt in Walter Livingstone, and lavished much attention on him, and had written most tender condolences on his death to his father, Lord Glenruth, on the strength of all this, and feeling also that he had a claim of kindness on one who had found in his house a home in the days of her widowhood, considered that Lady Markham was the most natural guardian for his daughter, and to her and Sir Ralph, therefore, he had consigned her.

For the mother of two marriageable daughters to be the aunt of a young man
of large expectations, heir to a peerage, was another and a different thing from holding the same relationship towards a beautiful young girl of no fortune. But there was no backing out, and even if there had been, the hearty and hospitable Sir Ralph would not have suffered it. He had not forgotten kindness received in former days, and he swore the little girl should never want a home while he had one.

"So write, my Lady, and tell him so; you can say pretty things better than I can."

Sir Ralph was a kind-hearted man in the main. It was a pity he did not rule his own house a little more consistently.

At the close of a dark November day, Grace entered the gates of Ashby Park. It was what is called a fine place, of considerable extent, adorned with noble trees and a piece of water.
The house had been built at that era, when it seemed good to our ancestors to dwell in Grecian temples, and tell their tales of love in Arcadian strains. It had a Doric front, adorned with an Ionic pediment, and a portico, supported by Corinthian pillars. It seemed as if the architect had been so enamoured of his art, that he must please himself with a specimen of every order. But it was a massive and imposing edifice, well kept without, and containing within all the means and appliances of comfort, which are nowhere understood so perfectly as in an English country-house.

Bright fires were blazing in the lofty hall and spacious drawing-room, and a bright fire seems to me always emblematic of a cordial welcome. In this instance it seemed to be the only welcome the house had to offer. Solitary was that spacious drawing-room—solitary the lofty hall.
When Grace, whose heart was fluttering at the idea of meeting her aunt and cousins, was ushered into the room, where she expected to see them, she found herself alone; nor was it until she had sat there nearly half an hour that any one appeared. There is something very depressing in such a half-hour, especially after a long journey, more especially when the heart is heavy, and yearns for kindness.

The first person who broke in upon Grace's solitude was the housemaid; a few minutes after whose retreat entered a young girl of twelve or fourteen, whose deportment was so unlike Grace's ideas of what a gentleman's child should be, that she hesitated to address her as a cousin. But her doubts were solved by the young lady accosting her.

"Oh! ma sent me to say she would be down very soon; she is dressing. I was to take you to your room if you liked; but I
looked in as I came down, and the fire had gone out, so I sent Jane to light it, and I think you had better stay here till it burns."

"Perhaps," said Grace, "I had better go up stairs, as you say my aunt is dressing. Which of my cousins is this?" added she.

"I am Fanny; but do you call us cousins — how droll! Mamma says you are no relation to us, nor even to her."

"I believe I am not actually a cousin, but I have always thought of you as cousins, and I hope you will let me call you so."

"Oh, I am sure I shall be very glad. I dare say we shall all like you very much," said Miss Fanny, surveying Grace with something of a gracious, patronizing air.

"Will you take me to my room now, Fanny? I fear I shall not be ready in time for dinner, unless I go to dress at once."
"Oh, you need not be in any hurry, there is to be no dinner to-day. Mamma and sisters are going out, and I heard ma say that you would like better to have tea, and go to bed early."

"So I shall," said Grace, "for I am rather tired."

It was true, yet she felt somewhat pained rather than gratified, by the manner in which her wishes had been taken for granted.

It is not always what is said, but how it is said, that gives pleasure or pain.

Miss Fanny had, probably, exceeded her commission, in repeating what she had heard, and seemed to be aware of this, for as she caught the sound of a rustling silk, she whispered:

"Don't tell mamma I said she was going out to dinner," and speedily vanished; and Lady Markham entered. A stately dame was she.
So many years had elapsed since Grace had seen her aunt, that they met as strangers. Nor was Lady Markham's appearance calculated to realise the conception Grace had formed—partly a dreamy recollection of a fair, slender, graceful form; partly from the promptings of her own affectionate heart.

A well-preserved woman, on the borders of fifty, advanced with measured pace; and as Grace started forward to embrace her, she extended her hands, not her arms, imprinted a kiss on either cheek, and said:

"My dearest girl, I am charmed to see you! how well you look, in spite of all—ah!"—her perfumed pocket-handkerchief for a moment veiled her eyes. Then turning to two young ladies who followed in her wake, "This is my Charlotte and this my Augusta; kiss each other, my loves—ah!"

There was some warmth in Charlotte's embrace; but Augusta's salute was below zero.
How cold a kiss can be.

"I am sure, my dear, that you must be quite worn out with your long journey, and will prefer to go to bed early, so I thought it kindest to you to adhere to an engagement which was made before we knew on what day you would arrive. You can have dinner of course; but perhaps you have already dined. Should you like to have tea in your own room, or in the school-room with my little girls? I think you have already made acquaintance with Fanny."

Grace preferred having tea in her own room.

"Then let me show you the way up stairs, my love. I am afraid we must be going immediately."

"Mamma," said Charlotte, "let me stay with my cousin: I would rather."

"Nonsense, my dear, you would only be in the way, and you know you are engaged
to sing with Mr. Folijambe and Lady Sophia. I cannot hear of it."

"Oh! do not think of such a thing," said Grace; "indeed I would rather go to bed, I should be very bad company." But she felt cheered by Charlotte's offer, evidently dictated by a kindly impulse.

Arrived up stairs, Lady Markham led the way through corridors and passages into a prettily-furnished room, which would have been a picture of comfort if the chimney had not been seized with one of those fits of perversity to which the best-regulated chimneys are occasionally subject; for no assignable reason it refused to do its office. The fire would not burn, and the room was filled with smoke.

"Bless me!" said Lady Markham, "this is very strange. I never knew the ivy-room smoke before. What is the reason of this, Jane?"
"I'm sure I don't know, my Lady," replied the kneeling housemaid, who was expending much brown paper, breath, and tears—the last compelled by the smoke—upon the impracticable grate. "When I looked in before, I saw it burning like anything, and next time it do be smoking like a pit."

"This will never do, my dear, you must let me take you to the school-room until your room can be made habitable. How very provoking!"

"Had not the pink-room better be got ready, mamma?" said Charlotte, who had followed them up stairs: "there has been a fire in it constantly of late, and it never smokes."

"I will see about it; but do you go down stairs, my love, and see that your music is put into the carriage, we shall be very late. This way, my dear," turning to Grace.

"Miss Hyndford, I have brought you a
guest, to whom Fanny and Julia must do the honours in my absence. Miss Livingstone's room is full of smoke, so she will take tea with you. Now I must bid you good-night, my love. I trust you will sleep well, and be quite fresh to-morrow. We shall meet at breakfast: Fanny will tell you the hours."

Another frigid kiss, and Lady Markham swept out of the room.

Miss Hyndford had risen and courtesied when introduced in Lady Markham's indifferent manner. She now came forward to assist Grace in taking off her cloak and bonnet, with which all this time she had been encumbered; and as she did so Grace was struck with the sweet tones of her voice, and the dove-like expression of her hazel eyes. She appeared to be about eight-and-twenty, and had the quiet self-possessed manners of a lady who knew her position—and respected it.
Miss Hyndford had known affliction. Grace's pale, sorrowful face and deep mourning dress appealed strongly to her heart; and by a nameless art, which is to be felt rather than described, she showed her sympathy. The answering chord was touched, and Grace was glad she had been driven for refuge into the school-room.

There was something so soothing in the gentle, unobtrusive attentions which left nothing undone to promote the comfort of their object, and yet were performed so quietly that they were rather felt than observed.

By the time tea was over, Grace felt so much refreshed, that she was not so thankful as she expected to have been, when her maid came to tell her that the refractory chimney had been brought to a sense of its duty, and her room was ready; and yet she had exchanged very few words with Miss Hyndford.
Miss Fanny had monopolized the conversation, or would have done so, but for her governess's admonition to silence; and when tea was over, Miss Hyndford said:

"Will you go, my dear, and read this new story-book to Ellen? she is awake now, and I promised she should hear it if she took a good sleep."

"Won't it do if I go by-and-by, Miss Hyndford?" said Miss Fanny, who was engaged very much to her taste in scrutinizing and questioning her new acquaintance.

"Not so well, my dear; to oblige quickly is to oblige twice; and I am sure you would be sorry to disappoint dear little Ellen."

"Shall Julia come too?"

"Julia is learning her lessons. I will send her presently."

"Who is Ellen?" asked Grace.

"My little invalid pupil," replied Miss
Hyndford; "a great sufferer at times, but a very patient one. She has been very ill lately, and is still confined to bed; but I hope we shall soon have her on her sofa again."

"Is she, then, a prisoner to the sofa?" asked Grace, observing that Miss Hyndford glanced towards a couch of peculiar construction, such as is used for persons with spine complaints.

"For nearly two years she has been laid on her back, and it seems doubtful whether she ever will regain the use of her limbs; but she is still very young—not ten years old, and the doctors say she may recover."

"Poor little girl!" said Grace, and she thought of her own happy, healthful childhood, with a sensation of thankfulness.

She fell asleep thinking of little Ellen.

"So, this is the little girl I remember
scampering about on a sheltie and climbing cherry-trees. Welcome to Ashby, my dear!"

It was something like a welcome, frank and kindly, if like the kiss which accompanied it, a trifle noisy and not superfine; but Grace was so grateful for the kindliness, that she took no exceptions at honest Sir Ralph's bluff manner, though his loud voice did ring through her head, and his sonorous salute, which sounded like the cracking of his hunting-whip, made her cheeks tingle.

She felt more at home after it than she had yet done at Ashby.

He was a tall, portly man, who had now to give a high figure for his hunters, but who showed no sign of age in his clear, unwrinkled brow and cheek, and firm elastic tread; partially bald he was, but goodly clusters of fair hair, scarcely tinged with
grey, adorned the back and sides of his round head; a merry blue eye, a handsome nose, and a mouth and chin indicative of good temper, if not of refinement, completed his pleasant physiognomy. He was reckoned a very fine specimen of his order, the English country gentleman, and I don't deny it. I had rather a weakness for Sir Ralph.

Lady Markham, in feature and complexion, was not very unlike her husband; here the resemblance ended.

Her blue eye was cold and clear, and hard as steel, hard as a blue eye only can be; her nose was finely cut, but rather thin, as were also her lips; nor could all the wreathed smiles with which she decked them, confer an expression of warmth to her countenance. The eye never smiled, but it was a very handsome face; its chief, almost only real defect, was that so com-
mon to her country (have I not said she was by birth a Scotchwoman?) the prominent cheek-bone, which generally gives a faulty setting to the eye, and often spoils the expression of milder orbs than those which illuminated Lady Markham's countenance. She had a tall, commanding person, but her movements were rather stiff and studied. She was what is often called an elegant woman, which does not always mean a graceful one.

Charlotte Markham's face was decidedly plain, and hardly seemed to belong either to father or mother. There was temper as well as passion in her dark, heavy-lidded eye and large mouth; but the latter was half-redeemed by the redness of the lips, and even whiteness of the teeth. She was sallow and dark-haired.

Augusta was a youthful repetition of her mother, with a brilliant complexion, and
hair considerably inclining to red, but which had saved its character by its quality and luxuriance. This, together with large, bony, red hands and flat arms, betrayed her Caledonian blood. Those hands were a heavy trial to her mother, who knew by experience that cosmetics were vain, and that age alone could tame them down to whiteness. Her own had cost her much fruitless pains, and even now required humouring. She never suffered them to hang down; but when advantageously disposed, and decked with handsome rings and bracelets, they had a very good effect. Poor Augusta’s were never presentable.

Nevertheless, she was an extremely handsome girl, an acknowledged beauty, of whom her mother hoped to make at least a Marchioness, if better might not be.

Such was the party assembled round the breakfast-table the morning after Grace’s arrival at Ashby.
In spite of all her prepossession in their favour, Grace could not help being disappointed in her first impressions of her cousins; and it would seem as if they also could have wished her personal appearance otherwise than it was, a feeling which I have reason to believe their mother shared; though she was too much mistress of herself—her outward self, that is to say—to betray it, she made much of her "sweet niece;" and Grace, ever alive to kindness, and too guileless to doubt its being genuine, returned her aunt's caresses with gratitude and affection—with affection, yet not with confidence. Why was this? Children are unconscious physiognomists; it is perhaps the safeguard of those to whom experience has not yet taught the wisdom of the serpent, that they also are frequently thus gifted; but it was to Grace for long a matter of self-reproach, that she could not freely con-
fide in one who treated her with so great a show of tenderness. Afterwards, she had reason to be thankful for this;—but I am anticipating.

Augusta's chilly manner was anything but encouraging, so Grace turned to Charlotte as the most accessible of the sisters; but she was positively ungracious. Something had gone wrong at Mr. Folijambe's, and it took more than one night to sleep off Miss Charlotte's ill-humour.

After breakfast, Lady Markham departed, on household cares intent, and Grace was left to the young ladies, neither of whom seemed inclined to exert themselves much for her entertainment.

A few very commonplace remarks from Augusta, and monosyllables from Charlotte, in reply to one or two questions which Grace hazarded, and then they relapsed into silence; thus Lady Markham found them.
"I am afraid you will not get out today," said she, glancing at the window, against which the rain was beating vehemently; "you must take your exercise within doors. My girls must show you the house, Grace—that will be something to do."

There was a deadly want of something to do indeed.

After Grace had been introduced to the glories of green-rooms and red-rooms, distinguished from each other chiefly by the colours of their furniture, she thankfully retired for some hours to her own.

After dinner Sir Ralph slumbered in his arm-chair, whilst Charlotte practised some new songs, and Augusta skimmed through the last novel. The sound of Charlotte's really beautiful voice powerfully affected Grace, and it was only by a strong effort she controlled herself; but she did; and
it never seemed to occur to any one that it might be trying to her to listen to music.

The next morning opened more auspiciously. The sky and Miss Charlotte's brow had cleared; she proposed a walk to Grace, and made herself agreeable—that is to say, she talked; and Grace listened, and tried to feel interested in an enumeration of the neighbours, their fortunes and their faults, by which it appeared that envy and jealousy of the Markham family pervaded the female mind of Warwickshire.

"But what makes you think everybody dislikes you?" inquired Grace. "Why should Miss Folijambe dislike you when you have been friends all your life?"

"Oh! I know a reason; jealousy, my dear, which generally exists between those who have known each other all their lives. She has never forgiven me for carrying off one of her admirers—a certain Captain
Armytage. By-the-bye, you know him, don’t you? He was a great friend of your poor brother’s.”

“Yes,” said Grace, I know.”

“Isn’t he handsome?” continued Charlotte. “Well, he was down at Woodsleigh last winter, and Lucy gloried exceedingly in having him in her train. How she did flirt, to be sure; in fact, she was desperately in love; so I was determined to make a capture of him; and didn’t I I enrage Lucy!”

“But I don’t think,” said Grace, “that you did right. Why should you wish to make her unhappy? How would you have liked any one to act so towards you?”

“Oh, my dear, I see you are one of the virtuous do-as-you-would-be-done-by young ladies. Depend upon it, that rule is obsolete. Do as you are done by, is the reading now-a-days.”
"But did Miss Folijambe ever do so by you?"

"No, but she would if she had a chance; besides, it is quite fair. She has a prettier face than I have, which I don't dispute. I never set up for a beauty; but she would fain persuade people she can sing as well or better, and that she has no business to pretend to. Let her keep to her own weapons, and not meddle with mine."

"And was that the weapon you employed in this instance?" asked Grace, with a secret anxiety to hear more of Edward Armytage.

"Yes, Captain Armytage is very fond of music, and has a magnificent voice; so I persuaded mamma to ask him here, on the plea of meeting Walter Livingstone, who was coming; and he accepted with the utmost alacrity. I suspect he was beginning to get rather afraid of committing himself
with Miss Lucy, not being a marrying man. Mamma didn’t quite like having him here; but I convinced her I was over head and ears in love with Walter Livingstone, and that I only wanted Captain Armytage to sing with; so she consented; but I think she was rather glad when his leave expired, and rejoiced in common with the mothers of England when he went to India; for though he doesn’t flirt, sentimental young ladies, like Miss Lucy Folijambe, lose their hearts to his handsome face, and neglect more eligible partis. I am sure Mrs. Folijambe owes me a debt of gratitude instead of a grudge."

A silence ensued.

"I suppose you think all this very wicked Miss Livingstone!" said Charlotte, in rather a huffy tone. She was beginning to take offence at the censure implied, as she imagined, in Grace’s silence.
"I was thinking," said Grace—and her voice trembled—"I was thinking of dear Walter; he was here this time last year. Oh! did you really love him, Charlotte? did he—" she could not go on.

"I—I—was very fond of him," said Charlotte; "we were great friends, that is to say—but I don't think he was in love with anybody, if you mean that, though mamma persuaded herself she was sure of him for one of us. But then you know she fancies everybody that has eyes must be in love with Augusta, and everybody that has ears with me. Poor Walter! I was shocked when I heard of his death; he had been with us that very morning. Grace! Grace! don't cry. Oh, what a fool I have been to speak about him. Here, sit down and compose yourself, and we will talk of something else,"

But it was some time before poor Grace could compose herself, nor was she inclined
to talk of something else; so they walked home in silence; Charlotte out of humour with herself, consequently with her companion, till when they had reached the house, Grace said to her:

"You must forgive me, dear Charlotte, and do not be vexed with yourself; it would be a comfort to me to speak of him; but I cannot help giving way sometimes. I hope you may never know what a sorrow it is to lose such a brother."

Charlotte was appeased; who could have resisted such sweet gentleness? She kissed Grace, and said:

"It was very thoughtless of me; but I will be more careful in future."

"But do not shrink from speaking of him when we are alone; I like to hear his name."

However Charlotte resolved to avoid the subject. She was not altogether without feeling; but she had a mortal aversion to
sentiment, under which head she reckoned every species of mental suffering.

Her mind, undisciplined by sorrow, could scarcely tolerate, far less sympathize with, the sorrow of others. She had enough of feeling to make it painful to her to witness grief; and being painful to her, she avoided the sufferer. She passed by on the other side.

There are few who can witness suffering quite unmoved; but there are not many who stop to pour in the oil and wine, and of those how few, how very few are they, who have never themselves known by experience the anguish of the wound! It is a blessed spirit, which from its own bright sphere of unclouded joy can stoop to minister to those who are dwelling in darkness and the shadow of death. Like the offering of a free and happy heart to God, most precious, but how rare, is that untaught sympathy which
measures grief by contrast with its own gladness, and can weep with others ere ever it has wept alone.

There was good in Charlotte; under different training much good might have been developed; but she had not only been untaught the right, she had been taught the wrong.

Self-interest the aim proposed in everything pride and vanity fostered, every generous impulse repressed; such motives as were supplied to her she attributed to others; and though when the right chord was touched, she might be roused to a momentary forgetfulness of self, it was but as a flash in the dark night. She had neither the patience nor the courage requisite to keep her in the better way, and in general she despised others too much to think them worth an effort.
"A letter from Ralph, my Lady," said Sir Ralph, one morning, when he had distributed the contents of the post-bag. "He is to be home for Christmas, and brings Beaumaris and Harry Clavering, so you will have partners a-piece, young ladies. By-the-bye, my dear, how have you settled it with Mordaunt and Sophy? Are they coming to us?"

"I must consult you about it first, Sir Ralph. I have not answered your sister's last letter yet. I think we must yield the point, and go to Bittering, as they wish it so much."

"Whioo! what has happened to change your Ladyship's mind? you told me last week it was out of the question. However, so be it, with all my heart. Bittering is very convenient for the Pytchley and Drakes, and its a long while since I've kept Christmas with Sophy. But what are we to do with these young fellows? We must put them off; that's a pity."
“I am sure Ralph’s friends would be welcome at Bittering. Sophia knows them both. However, we will talk it over presently. Augusta, my love, you can oblige me by answering a letter for me. Come to my sitting-room.”

There was no letter to be written; but there was a consultation to be held, as to how this rival beauty might most effectually be suppressed.

For they were forced to admit that she was beautiful—much too beautiful to be shown alongside of the fair Augusta.

“Just the sort of face some men would rave about; but she has not your style or usage du monde, my love; so I do not think you need be afraid of her.”

“Afraid of her!” echoed Augusta, in a tone of supreme contempt. “Why, she is a perfect automaton—pretty if you like—but without two ideas in her head.”
Ah! Miss Augusta, if you had but known it, that was exactly what Lord Beaumaris said to Captain Clavering, in confidence, of you, and yet you thought to be Lady Beaumaris before the next drawing-room!

"Well, but mamma," continued the young lady, "what about Bittering—why have you changed your mind?"

"My dear, do not you see? We should get rid of Grace by going there. Georgy and Emma would not be much in your way."

"How get rid of Grace? I am sure papa will insist on her accompanying us, and Aunt Sophy's hospitality is boundless. She is certain to send her an invitation."

"I intend to request one for her, but I shall take care she declines it. She could not go to a Christmas party at a strange house so soon after her father's death; but if we had our own house full, it would not be so easy to keep her entirely out of the way."
But, my sweet love, I must beg of you to pay her more attention in the mean time. Do not let there be any apparent want of affection. Nothing is more remarked than that sort of thing."

"Oh! Charlotte has taken her up in the meanwhile. It will be time enough for me to make advances when she lets her down; but I am sure Fanny and Julia would be fitter companions for her than either of us. What ideas can we have in common?"

(Not many, indeed, Miss Augusta.)

"That is just what I am at," said Lady Markham. "If she could be made to consider the school-room her proper place, we should have very little difficulty. I must speak to her on the subject of her neglected education, for I know she has had no governess since she was fifteen."

"The worst of it is, Fanny is such a chatterbox, she lets out all sorts of things."
I wish you would send that child to school, mamma."

"I cannot do that, my dear, and keep a hundred guinea governess like Miss Hyndford—your father would never hear of it."

"Why not part with Miss Hyndford, and get a less expensive governess?"

"But then Miss Hyndford takes such a charge of Ellen."

"Any nursery-maid would do as well for that."

"I do not think your father would hear of parting with Miss Hyndford. You know it was he who engaged her, and he has always piqued himself very much upon it, as she has remained longer here than any of her predecessors. Besides, my dear she is a much more likely person to attract Grace to the school-room, than another might be. They appear to have struck up a great friendship already."
"There is something in that," said Augusta.

I scarcely think, my patient reader, that you would be rewarded for your long suffering, by wading through a chronicle of many days at Ashby; so you shall be spared the trial.

Having given you a sketch of the line of country her Ladyship intended to take, suffice it to say, she was not diverted from her course. The family repaired to Bittering to spend Christmas, with Sir Ralph's sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt; and Grace willingly remained at Ashby with Miss Hyndford and little Ellen, in whose society alone she found anything like pleasure.

It was not until she had been a week or two at Ashby, that she first saw the little invalid, whose recent illness for long confined her to her bed; but one evening, going
into the school-room, as had become a custom with her, she found the couch occupied. Little Ellen bore slight resemblance to her brother and sisters, all of whom had inherited robust health. No one could tell how it was that, when the other children recovered so easily from measles, Ellen should sink into state of helpless weakness, which ended in paralysis of the lower limbs. It may be imagined, that the one little sufferer, attracted a double portion of love from all, especially from the mother’s heart; such is almost invariably the case, but it was not so here. Lady Markham, exempt from personal experience of sickness, had that intolerance of ill-health in others, which I have known to exist in the male mind, not very unfrequently, but hardly ever in the tenderer bosom of woman. How it might have been with her, had she been called upon to undergo anxiety for her favourite children
—for favourites she had—it is impossible to say; but in Ellen's case, she was inclined first to ignore, then to resent the unusual fact of unhealthiness in her nursery, and the first consequence of this was a neglect of means, which might have tended to her recovery.

Ellen had neither beauty nor remarkable musical talent, to recommend her to her mother's pride—I cannot call it affection—and when she became an invalid, she became also an object of dislike, rather than of tenderness, or even of pity; and happy was it for her that, when she was considered too old to be "spoiled and coddled" in the nursery, she experienced from Miss Hyndford an affection more tender than her mother's more judicious than that of her nurse.

"Is this little Ellen?" said Grace, kindly sitting down by the sofa, and taking the tiny hand in hers—a beautiful little hand—it
was so fair, so taper, yet not what one likes to see in childhood.

"I am so glad to see you here at last, dear: we shall make acquaintance now—you know who I am?"

"I think you must be cousin Grace," said the little girl, "because Miss Hyndford told me you had hair like gold."

Grace smiled. "Where is Miss Hyndford?" asked she; "I generally find her here at this hour."

"Mamma sent for her a little while ago; but I hope she will be back very soon."

"You love Miss Hyndford very much, Ellen?"

"Oh that I do;" and the little pale face brightened with emotion: "she is so good and kind to me."

I said Ellen had no beauty to commend her to her mother's eye; but she was not without loveliness in the eyes of those who
could see beyond mere form and colour. Her clear pale-blue eye was full of sweet expression, and the form of her face, though it wanted the bloom and roundness of healthful youth, was refined and delicate. Her light-brown hair was cut short like a boy's, and fell in wavy masses around the transparent blue-veined temples; her features were small and child-like—there was something very attractive about her.

"Is Miss Hyndford reading this to you?" said Grace, taking up a volume of Sir Walter Scott's poetry: "are you fond of poetry, Ellen."

"Oh, so fond of it; especially when Miss Hyndford reads to me."

"Shall I read till she comes back?"

"I should like it very much, if it would not trouble you."

And the blue eyes glistened, as Grace read, with the taste and feeling of a poetic
mind, some of the most beautiful passages in the "Lady of the Lake.

"Thank you cousin Grace," said little Ellen; and just then Miss Hyndford came in.

"Ellen and I have been making acquaintance in your absence, Miss Hyndford," said Grace. "I was so glad to find her here when I came in."

"And you have found the way to Ellen's heart. I see, Miss Livingstone, you have been reading to her."

"Indeed, Miss Hyndford, it was cousin Grace who was so kind as to offer. I did not ask her."

Miss Hyndford smiled—it was such a tender smile. "I am sure you did not, my darling. Are you lying easily?" she asked as she arranged the pillows.

"Quite easily; and I am so happy to be in this room again;" and the little mouth was held up to kiss her kind friend.
Grace did not envy Miss Hyndford—envy in any form could scarcely find a place in her breast; but she felt how much she needed some one to love.

*To love,* rather than to *be* loved, is the great craving of such natures. With overflowing affections, it is so hard for them to keep pent up within their bosoms, the full stream, whose tendency is to pour itself forth on all around.

But when the lot of such a one is cast among uncongenial spirits—people who will not be loved, who don’t understand it, or who, incapable themselves of a genuine feeling, suspect all others of insincerity—then is that lot a very hard one. And thus it was with Grace. To her aunt she could not attach herself. The insensibility of Augusta, and the captious temper of Charlotte, whose fitful liking gave way to jealousy when she found, as she considered, a rival in musical
talent, alike repelled her. And had it not been for Miss Hyndford the spacious halls of Ashby would not have contained for her one friend.

Lady Markham's point was gained—Grace's time was chiefly spent in the school-room; and by degrees it came to be an understood thing, that whenever there was a dinner party, including any one more attractive than the ancient rector or the family apothecary, Miss Livingstone would prefer taking tea in the school-room—and she did prefer it—neither did she perceive the motive for the arrangement, which certainly was not a disinterested regard to her inclinations.

To Miss Hyndford the companionship of such a creature as Grace was inexpressibly delightful, and drew forth all her powers, which were great. She was an accomplished, as well as an intellectual woman;
and none could be more charming in conversation, when with those who could appre-
ciate her.

At Ashby Miss Hyndford was considered simply as "the governess," an office which neither by seniors or juniors was held in much esteem. Fortunately she had none of that morbid feeling so common—often, it must be allowed—excusable in her order. She had been in happier situations, but she knew that vicissitudes of this kind were to be looked for; and the affection of so interesting a child as Ellen made up to her in a great measure for the shortcomings of her other pupils, who certainly were not interesting. Fanny was essentially vulgar-minded, without talent for anything but gossip, for which she showed an uncommon aptitude; but she promised to be handsome, as did also Julia, who, moreover, had a fine voice, to the cultivation of which Miss Hynd-
ford was enjoined by Lady Markham to give her utmost attention. Accomplishments were all she desired. She rather counteracted than encouraged the attempts Miss Hyndford made to influence her pupils' minds. Lady Markham had, above all things, a dread of her children being made "serious;" and conceiving that the course of religious instruction pursued by Miss Hyndford might possibly have that result, she signified her intention of taking that in hand herself, a prudent precaution, it must be admitted. The wise adaptation of means to the end proposed is, I believe, the definition of prudence.

"This is surely a view of some place in Scotland," said Grace one day as she was searching in Miss Hyndford's portfolio of water-colours for something to copy. "At least, I have seen nothing like it since I
crossed the Solway. Oh, how one does long for the sight of a purple hill and brown water. What is the name of this place, Miss Hyndford?

"That is Invercarron, where I lived before I came here. It belongs to a namesake of yours, Miss Livingstone—but no relation, I believe—Sir Thomas Livingstone of Lee."

"The Livingstones of Lee—were you in that family, Miss Hyndford? Oh, do tell me about them. We are related, though very distantly, and I have always wished to know them."

"I understood from Miss Markham that you were of a different family—for I asked her when I heard you named."

"Oh, I dare say the relationship would be reckoned as nothing in England, but you know we count cousins in Scotland to the hundredth; and I have so few relations, that I cannot afford to overlook any."
"These are relations few would be disposed to overlook, who once had the good fortune to make their acquaintance. I wish you knew them, dear Miss Livingstone; you must claim the privilege of cousinship and introduce yourself."

"Indeed I shall like much to do so. I have often wished I knew them, for I have heard of them before as a very charming family. How long is it since you left them, Miss Hyndford?"

"About two years; but I have seen some of the family since then, and my dear pupil writes to me very frequently."

"Is there only one daughter?"

"Only one unmarried—the youngest of thirteen."

"What is her name?"

"Katherine."

"I like that name, especially if it is spelt with a K. I am sure I should like her."
"I am sure you would, irrespective of her name, or the spelling of it. Have you a theory about names, Miss Livingstone?"

"Not exactly a theory; but one has associations with names, either from books or people. I have loved Katherine ever since I read Henry VIII."

"I am not sure that Miss Livingstone would quite realise your conception of the injured Queen," said Miss Hyndford, smiling; "but I think she would create associations for herself quite as pleasing."

"I wish I knew her," said Grace.

"And I wish very much she knew you, dear Miss Livingstone."

From this time forth the Invercarron family formed a frequent theme of conversation between Grace and Miss Hyndford, which conversations, however, it is not my present purpose to record—chiefly because I am unable to do so. It is sufficient to say
that Grace often caught herself wishing Lady Livingstone had been the widow of her uncle rather than of her twenty-second cousin.

Lady Markham prolonged her stay at Bittering beyond the most extended limits of a Christmas visit; but when it came to an inevitable close, Miss Augusta was no nearer being Marchioness of Beaumaris than she had been six months ago, and her Ladyship had to strike the balance of advantages between bringing the young peer to Ashby, at the risk of an encounter with Grace’s dangerous beauty, or letting the affair stand over till the next London season.

It was a cruel predicament, as I am sure you, dearest dowager, who have been in similar straits, will feelingly acknowledge.

Lord Beaumaris put her out of pain, by declining Sir Ralph’s invitation, on the plea of having engagements at home, which he had neglected too long already.
This at least was consolatory, a tribute to Miss Augusta's *beaux yeux*, which, however, to say truth, never occurred to Lord Beaumaris.

So the family returned to Ashby Park, and kept Lent in a religious and economical manner; seeing no company and going to bed early, in order to be prepared with recruited means and complexions for the campaign which was to open after Easter.
CHAPTER V.

"Was mir fehlt? Mir fehlt ja Alles
Bin so ganz verlassen hier."

"She must go with us, your father insists upon it, and you know how immoveable he can be. And after all, I think it will be best—of course she will not go out, and I do not intend to give many parties. Besides, I have something else in view, trust me: I shall not allow her to stand in your way. So do not vex yourself about it, my Augusta."

"But it is such a bore, mamma, having always to consider her; and we must take
her out in the carriage sometimes. Why couldn't she stay here with Miss Hyndford and the children?"

"I tell you, my dear, your father will not hear of it; and it will suit us much better if we can get her off our hands altogether before autumn. She cannot always be kept in the school-room."

So Grace accompanied the party to London. When first proposed to her, she would fain have declined it; but Miss Hyndford's suggestion that she would probably have an opportunity in London of making acquaintance with some of the Invercarron family, gave quite a new colour to the idea, and with this hope she took her way less reluctantly to the great metropolis.

When, however, she found herself once more in the scene which memory made so terrible, the poor girl's heart sank within her,
and more utterly alone than ever she felt, in the small dull room which was her sole retreat from uncongenial society. Alone, indeed! In all that mighty multitude, whose ceaseless sound reached her solitary chamber, not one friend had she—not one human being, to whom she could open the floodgates of her grief. To have named her dead, in careless ears, would have been profanation; and excepting those under whose roof she dwelt, all in that great city were utter strangers to her.

And yet how many kind hearts were among them—hundreds—thousands, who, if they had known that young creature's sorrow, would have shown her true and tender sympathy—would have said to her, "Weep, poor heart! weep, and be comforted: we too have wept."

In distress of any kind, to have help within reach, yet unavailable, has always seemed to
me one of the saddest conditions of humanity; the ship going down within reach of shore, awakens even a deeper pity than one storm-wrecked on the wide waters; a Lazarus perishing at the door of a Dives, appears more forlorn for that neighbourhood.

Almost daily by the house where she sat, pining in her lonely grief, there passed one to whom in after years Grace was as a daughter, more than one who learned to hold her among their dearest; but they could do nothing for her now. And *they* who alone had the power had not the will, to bind up the wounded heart.

It would have been difficult—*I* hope it would have been difficult, to find another family with hearts so hard and cold, as to refuse sympathy to one so young, so gentle, so sorrow-laden. *I am glad to believe there are few* Lady Markhams; *I never knew but one.* It seemed very hard that poor Grace
should so miss the shelter of all the tender, motherly bosoms in England, and be driven by the tempest on that rocky breast. What wonder if her spirit yearned for him who was now almost her only link with happy days departed—whose tears had been shed with her and for her, who had been to her as a brother. What wonder if she longed to lay her weary head on that kind heart and weep away her woe.

Yet, let it not be thought that she was comfortless. Her faith was strong—her trust in God unshaken, and she had many an hour of that peace which the trusting heart alone can know. But she was young; she had been sorely tried; she owned a human love, and she yearned for human sympathy.

Wearily the days dragged on. Grace went out nowhere, and seldom appeared at the home parties, which, indeed, were not
frequent. It was impossible, however, to keep her entirely out of sight, and she was sitting alone in the drawing-room one day when Lady Beaumaris was announced, accompanied by her son.

While awaiting the appearance of her aunt and cousins, Grace entered into conversation with the visitors, with the ease and composure natural to those who are little occupied with thoughts of self. Lady Markham's worst fears were realised. The young Marquis, whose heart, despite Miss Augusta's charms, was, up to that moment, his own peculiar property, surrendered it then and there, unconditionally. It was a case of love at first sight; and when Grace knew that he had been a friend of Walter's, and as she more than guessed of Edward's also, she, without any thought of encouraging attentions, of which, in fact, she was quite unsuspicuous, showed very naturally the pleasure she took in conversing with one,
who, besides these recommendations, had divers of his own, which might have stood him in good stead with 'ladye fair,' even had he not been Marquis of Beaumaris, and owner of £50,000 a-year; for he was amiable, handsome, accomplished, and most wonderfully unspoiled by flattery.

"What a lovely creature!" exclaimed Lady Beaumaris, as Grace, sent on some errand by her aunt, left the room. "Your niece, Lady Markham? Pray, may I ask whose daughter?"

"My adopted niece," replied Lady Markham. "Grace Livingstone is an orphan," and she sighed—a very genuine sigh.

"What? a sister of poor Walter Livingstone's, who was killed last year? of course! I was struck with the likeness immediately," said Lord Beaumaris, decisively. "Lord Glenruth's daughter then—you knew him, mother?"
"Lord Glenruth! is that Lord Glenruth's daughter? Yes, I knew him many years ago. She is in mourning for her father then; and lives with you, Lady Markham?"

"Yes, dear child! we have offered her a home," replied Lady Markham, "as no other relation appeared willing to do so, and I cannot regret it, though —"

"Surely, she was not in the room on Friday evening? I could not have overlooked that face."

"We could not persuade her to come down stairs. My girls tried very hard to coax her, but she naturally shrinks from society just now; of course, I do not expect her to go out, but I wish she could be prevailed on to appear at our own parties, it might do her good."

"Of course—you should insist upon it, Lady Markham! You must bring her with you on Wednesday—quite a small party—pray do—she quite captivates me."
"I will do my best, but I doubt her consenting. By-the-by, my dear Lady Beaumaris, are you going to the drawing-room on the 16th?"

"I believe I am. Can I be of any use to you?"

"I am very anxious that Augusta should be presented. She was to have gone last year, but unluckily took chicken-pox, and this year I am obliged to go out of town on the 15th for a week. If I might presume on your kindness so far, I would ask you to introduce her."

"Surely; I shall have much pleasure."

"My dear, I wish to have some conversation with you," said Lady Markham to Grace one morning after breakfast; "and I must entreat you to be candid with me, and not to attempt concealment."

This was rather an alarming preamble, and Grace would gladly have escaped the sequel,
she knew by experience that "a conversa-
tion" with her aunt, whose tenderness was
now kept for company only, had a very de-
pressing influence.

"You must have observed Augusta’s
altered looks of late, in spite of her efforts to
appear gay—dear, generous angel—and I
think you must have guessed the reason,
though, of course, you would be the last
person to whom she would betray her feel-
ings."

Grace could only look, as she felt, very
much puzzled.

"My dear girl, do not affect unconscious-
ness with me; pray let us understand each
other."

That was just what Grace was vainly
endeavouring.

"Indeed, aunt—" she began.

"Do you mean that you have not observed
that Augusta is looking ill?"
“Charlotte told me she had caught cold.”

“Caught cold! Some people are very easily satisfied, but a mother’s anxiety is not quite so soon allayed. Would you like to know the real cause of your cousin’s illness?”

“Certainly, aunt; if I can do anything to relieve it, as your words seem to imply; but indeed I am quite at a loss as to your meaning.”

“Perhaps you will tell me also that you have not observed Lord Beaumaris’s attentions, that his tender looks have passed quite unheeded?”

Grace felt the colour mount to her cheeks. Lord Beaumaris’s attentions, the last time they had met, had been unequivocal—distressing to her, for she liked him, and was grateful to his mother for her marked kindness; still she could not see what this had to do with Augusta.
"You need not take the trouble to answer me, my dear. I see your encouragement to his Lordship, and devotion to his mother, are likely to be rewarded; and it cannot signify much to you what my poor child may endure from the fickleness of one to whom she has given a heart not lightly won. It took more than a month's acquaintance to convince her of his affection; but once convinced, she never doubted it, till doubt became too cruel certainty."

"My dear aunt, I knew nothing of all this," said Grace, much distressed, and not knowing how much to believe. "You surely cannot suppose I would encourage attentions which were due to another."

"I can only judge, my dear, by what I see, and unfortunately I cannot help seeing what passes before my eyes. I have not the faculty of convenient blindness."

Grace felt too much wounded to reply to this.
"All I have to beg," continued Lady Markham "is, that your engagement may not be made public while in town, it would scarcely be decent in your circumstances; and if I might suggest anything, it would be that you should go down to Ashby as soon as convenient. Of course, all I have said is strictly between ourselves—you understand that."

"Perfectly. I shall be only too glad to go down to Ashby to-morrow; and as to any engagement between Lord Beaumaris and myself, I can assure you there is none."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say; that I am not engaged to Lord Beaumaris."

"You have refused him?"

"Lord Beaumaris has not put it in my power to do so."

"Why did you blush, then, when I taxed you with it?"
Grace blushed again, but rather with indignation than consciousness.

"I think, aunt, I have answered as many questions as you have any right to ask me."

"Any right to ask you? and pray, Miss Livingstone, who has a right to your confidence if I have not?"

"No one has a right to ask such a question as you put to me just now."

"Oh, it has come to this, has it? I am not to be honoured with Miss Livingstone's confidence; it is enough that she condescends to accept the shelter of my roof, and a seat at my table. I must not aspire to more; or, perhaps—"

Grace rose, and left the room; she could not stand this any longer.

Lady Markham had overshot her mark; she saw it, and lost her temper, a thing unusual with her. She was at fault too.
Grace's ready acquiescence to the proposal of going to Ashby staggered her.

Straightforwardness is that thing which those who love to wander in crooked ways can, by no means, understand, and in which, for most part, they do not believe. She was sure there was something behind; she could not take in the idea of Grace refusing a coronet, and fifty thousand a-year, conscious as she was that Ashby was not a home of happiness to the orphan girl.

"I will take her at her word, at all events," said her Ladyship to her only confidante (herself to wit); "for I see Lord Beaumaris is hovering on the brink of a proposal, and the Dowager is immensely taken with her. I know a way to put the old lady off it, however."
CHAPTER VI.

"INSANITY! Oh! Lady Markham, it cannot be true!"

"Too true, I grieve to say, my dear Lady Beaumaris. Poor Lord Glenruth was quite out of his mind for some months before his death. It is not generally known, and I am sure it will not become more public through you. Judge how painful it is to me to communicate such a fact, but I could not suffer you to continue in ignorance of it, when I saw you so well-disposed to encourage Lord

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Beaumaris's evident attachment to my niece, who, sweet engaging girl as she is, and in all other respects everything that could be wished, has yet that fatal taint in her blood."

"My dear Lady Markham, I must be grateful to you; but I cannot express to you my disappointment, my distress. That lovely girl!—I thought I had at last found a wife worthy of my dear son; and now—Are you quite sure it was hereditary with Lord Glenruth? I have heard he was severely wounded at Waterloo."

"He was; but I fear—indeed I have too good reason to know—it had manifested itself in others of the family. And to tell the whole sad truth: my sweet Grace herself has fits of abstraction and moodiness, from which Dr. S—— augurs the worst results, should anything occur to develop the disease. Lady Beaumaris, you little
know what it costs me to acknowledge this.” Here her Ladyship’s voice became tremulous, and her handkerchief was put in requisition. “I know,” continued she, “it has been remarked how seldom she appeared in public; even at our own house, I made the excuse of her being still in deep mourning; but the real reason was, that she was either in a state of hopeless depression or unnatural excitement, even more distressing to witness, and which would have occasioned most painful comments. By care and watchfulness, I trust we shall be able to keep her with us; for it would cost me a bitter struggle to give her up to the care of strangers, and none of her own relations are disposed to undertake so anxious a charge. Dr. S—— has more than once suggested that a quiet clergyman’s house would be a better home for her than our large stirring family, but I cannot make
up my mind to it. I look upon her as a sacred trust; and so long as we have so invaluable a person as Miss Hyndford, my younger daughter's governess, who has great influence with dear Grace, I feel justified in keeping her with us. But I see it will not do for her to remain in town. In fact, Dr. S—— has insisted on her being sent to the country immediately, so we have decided that she goes to-morrow."

"To-morrow! then I shall not see her again!" said kind Lady Beaumaris, in an accent of real sorrow.

"Better not, my dear Lady Beaumaris; and even had she remained, I durst not have trusted her to accept your kind invitation. Music, for which she has a wonderful talent, excites her beyond all belief. I dare not let her sing with my Charlotte, though it costs me no small self-denial to forbid it; her voice is magnificent. Sweet
girl! she is dear to me almost as a daughter of my own, and her infirmity only makes her more precious."

"Strange that I should never have detected the slightest symptom of this," said Lady Beaumaris musingly; "a subject in which I am so painfully interested. There is nothing I dread so much as Ernest marrying into a family where that terrible malady lurks; but she seemed so calm, so composed—it is marvellous!"

"She has been wonderfully equal during the last four or five weeks; but as you know, my dear Lady Beaumaris, I have often made excuses when you kindly asked her to go out with you, and now you know my reason."

"You are indeed a true friend."

"How completely one may be misled by appearances," thought good Lady Beaumaris, mournfully shaking her head after this inter-
view. "Who would have imagined that sweet, serene-looking girl was the victim of insanity? or that worldly woman, Lady Markham, could have been so moved? I have done her great injustice; she cannot be so worldly as people say, and she has certainly laid me under the greatest obligation. But how shall I break it to my poor Ernest? for he is already deeply attached. How shall I convince him of the terrible truth?"

Lord Beaumaris was not to be convinced, but he yielded so far to his mother's entreaties as to promise that he would not actually propose to Grace until he had taken means of ascertaining the truth or falsehood of Lady Markham's statement. He loved his mother dearly; and he saw that she would gladly have welcomed Grace as a daughter, but for this painful suspicion.
“I know how to find out, mother; you will see it is all an invention;” and his Lordship indulged in some remarks on Lady Markham, which need not be recorded; at which, as well as at his unqualified disbelief of that lady’s story, his good mother was somewhat scandalized.

“My dear Ernest, if you had seen poor Lady Markham’s emotion, you could not suspect her of such dreadful wickedness; she may be mistaken; I devoutly hope she is; but no one could be so wicked as to invent such a tale. Pray do not allow yourself to be so uncharitable.”

“My dear, good mother, you don’t know Lady Markham as well as I do.”
CHAPTER VII.

"I look to recognise again, through the beautiful mask of their perfection, the dear familiar faces I have somewhat loved on earth."—TUPPER, PROVERNAL PHILOSOPHY.

Ashby Park, with its fine oaks decked in their summer's green, was a very different place from what it had been during a wet winter and cold backward spring. In its peace and quiet, and the society of Miss Hyndford, Grace soon regained her serenity, which had been somewhat shaken by her aunt's attack. She could not easily forget the cruel insult to which she had been subjected, which made her feel that at Ashby she was considered as an intruder, and that it
never could be, in the true sense, her home. No other home, however, appeared as yet open to her—there was nothing for it but to wait.

"You did not meet any of the Invercarron family, I fear, Miss Livingstone," said Miss Hyndford. "I find that instead of going to town this year, Lady Livingstone and Miss Katherine have gone abroad, and are to winter at Florence, where they meet Colonel and Mrs. Livingstone, who are coming home from India."

"It was a great disappointment to me to hear or see nothing of them; and the more so, as I saw Captain Livingstone's card several times on my aunt's table, but I always missed him. I believe he was asked to come down here in September, but that he is going abroad, too."

"Yes; Miss Katherine writes me he is to join them in Italy, which is very delightful for
her. She is so very fond of her brother—indeed, they are the most united family I ever saw—all so affectionate, and so proud of each other."

Poor Grace sighed as she pictured to herself such a home, and contrasted it with Ashby. The family there had not the merit of being a united one, and certainly had no overflowings of affection to spare for an alien.

"How I wish I knew them!"

"Miss Katherine is as anxious to make your acquaintance as you can be to make hers. She charges me to tell you so. I think I must let you read her letter, it is so characteristic."

"What a sweet, kind, clever letter," said Grace, as she returned it to Miss Hyndford. "How you must love her, Miss Hyndford. I do envy you. Let me look at it again. What a beautiful hand!—so free and flowing."
There is a great deal in handwriting, I think. But now tell me—how has dear little Ellen been since we parted? I think your letters about her seemed anxious. How often I have wished myself back with you and her!"

"I fear you will see a change for the worse in little Ellen. I sometimes think my darling is not to be left with us much longer. She has suffered much lately, and is more patient and gentle than ever, if possible; but she has been rather easier within the last week, and enjoys being out in the lime avenue, where we spend most of our time on fine days."

"And how are Fanny and Julia?"

"Quite well as to health—much the same as you left them in other respects. We have been going on very quietly, having fewer distractions."

"They do not improve?"

"I cannot flatter myself they do; but I
should like to have your opinion after absence, Miss Livingstone."

Quoth Miss Fanny at breakfast next morning—"Well, cousin Grace, have you made many conquests in London? I suppose you will be having some beaux coming after you soon."

"Fanny!" said Miss Hyndford admonishingly.

"Oh, Miss Hyndford, I am sure I have guessed right. Look how cousin Grace is blushing! Besides, I know what Parker wrote to Amelia, about somebody whose name begins with a B. There, you are blushing again, Grace;" and Fanny giggled with delight at her successful pleasantry.

"If I am blushing, it is at your want of good breeding, Fanny. Do you know that you have made a very vulgar and impertinent speech?"
“Vulgar and impertinent,” muttered Julia. “I wish mamma heard you say that?”

“Young mamma, I hope, would have spared me the pain of saying so, had she been here.”

“Fanny and Julia, I am indeed ashamed of you both. Miss Livingstone, I must apologise for the extreme rudeness of my pupils. I hope they will see the propriety of asking your pardon themselves.”

“I am very sorry if I have been rude to cousin Grace; but, indeed, I only meant it in fun,” said Fanny, somewhat abashed at the turn matters had taken.

Julia maintained a sullen silence. She was a particularly unamiable girl, both proud and vain in an inordinate degree, and case-hardened against reproof.

“Do not say more about it,” said Grace kindly; “but, dear Fanny, never be guilty of such a speech again. Now, I am sure Miss
Hyndford will give us all a holiday, and we will spend it out of doors. I do so long for a ramble in the woods."

"With all my heart, Miss Livingstone, since you are so kind as to ask it."

So they went out, and Fanny soon recovered her spirits.

"But did you not like London, cousin Grace? I am so fond of a town. I wish I were come out, that I might go there every year."

"I like the country better, Fanny; but I saw some things in London which interested me much; and I heard some beautiful music?"

"Did you go to the opera?"

"No; but I went to some of the Ancient Music Concerts."

"I don't care much for that sort of thing, but I should like to go to the opera or a theatre every night."
"Every night, Fanny?"

"Every night that I didn't go to a ball. Don't you like balls, cousin Grace?"

"I cannot say, having no experience."

"Do you mean you were never at a ball?"

"Never."

"Dear me! how odd. Why you are only a year younger than Augusta, and she has been at dozens and dozens of balls."

"They were not of such frequent occurrence where I lived, Fanny."

"What a dull life you must have had at Glenruth. Mamma says there was not a neighbour within ten miles, and that she used to hate going there."

Grace did not reply. She fell a-thinking what different ideas various minds will attach to the same word.

"Confess now, cousin Grace, you did think it dull—I am sure you must."

"No, Fanny; I was never dull there."
Her eyes were full of tears, and even the heedless Fanny thought well to change the subject.

"I grieve to say I do see a change for the worse in sweet little Ellen," said Grace to Miss Hyndford, as they sat together that night, after the children had gone to bed. "She is more wasted than ever, but how lovely she looks now. What does the doctor say?"

"Always the same thing. She is young. She may recover."

"And what does he prescribe?"

"Nothing new. In fact, I wish he would not prescribe at all, for I think his medicines do positive harm instead of good. Oh, Miss Livingstone, if I might but take her elsewhere for better advice and change of air. It is so hard to feel there may be remedies untried. If I knew that all had
been done which skill can do, I should be satisfied; but I have no confidence in poor old Mr. Richards, and as little in Dr. Frewen."

"Have any of the London physicians or surgeons been consulted?"

"Lady Markham intended when she left this to submit her case to Sir —— and Dr. S——"

"And have they not given their opinion yet?"

"Lady Markham writes me that she has been much occupied lately, but that she will have a consultation before leaving town."

"It has always surprised me, that my aunt is not more alarmed about Ellen."

"Lady Markham has had so little experience of illness, either in herself or her family, that she can hardly understand it. She thinks Ellen's delicacy arises solely from weakness, and that she will outgrow it."

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"It seems to me that she will outgrow her strength first, or rather that she has already."

"Look what cousin Grace has brought me, Miss Hyndford. All those poets for my very own—Cowper and Gray, and the beauties of Shakspeare, and Scott, and Byron, all so beautifully bound, and in a case. Is it not kind of her?" said the delighted little girl.

"Indeed, Ellen, that is a treasury! and look what I have got—a poetess, to keep you company," said Miss Hyndford, showing Grace's gift to her; "a volume of Miss Barnett's poems; and look at the first poem, I find something about Little Ellie."

"Oh, do let me see! Oh, what lovely poetry! Do let me read it to you." The child had a wondrous perception of beauty. She was truly what Miss Hyndford had playfully called her—a poetess.
"And here is something for the hands as well as the head," said Grace, producing a little box containing all the means and appliances for making wax flowers. "Look, Ellie, at those beautiful roses and carnations. I learned how to make them, and now I can teach you."

"Oh, cousin Grace, how beautiful! did you really make these yourself?"

"Yes, I really did; Ellie, and it is not very difficult; it requires only patience and delicate fingers. I am sure these wee hands will soon work wonders of skill," said Grace, as she took Ellen’s little transparent hand, and kissed it.

"And — what — I mean, did you bring anything for Fanny and Julia? because I don’t like to have all the things; and I think they would like to make wax flowers too."

"So they shall if they like; but I brought
a box of colours for Fanny, and a music-book for Julia."

"Oh, that is so nice—just what they would like. Do you know, Fanny has improved so much in her drawing—Miss Hyndford says so—she did some such pretty things in my book; and Julia has learned my favourite song to sing to me at night. They are so kind to me; and, oh! cousin Grace, do you know the Harrow holidays begin to-morrow? and Ralph and Charlie will be home on Friday. Dear Charlie! how happy I shall be then."

"That little tongue is going too fast," interposed Miss Hyndford. "You must be quiet, my child, or you will bring on your headache."

"Oh, but it is so long since I have seen cousin Grace, and I am so happy to have her sitting here again; but I will not talk any more, if you think I had better not."
“Try to take a little nap, my darling.”
“I will try, but I am not sleepy.”
“Do you think you could go to sleep if I were to sing the ‘Schlummer Lied,’ or ‘L’Oiseau Bleu’ to you?” said Grace
“Oh, do sing, cousin Grace, I will be quite quiet at least.”

“What a lovely picture they would make,” thought Miss Hyndford, as she looked at them.

Charlie Markham deserves to be singled out from his family, for he had a noble, frank, affectionate spirit; and wild and rough as he might be with others, to little Ellen he was ever gentle and loving. He never came home without bringing her some little keepsake; and, what was a much stronger proof of the hold she had upon his heart, he would often forego his favourite amusements to sit by her sofa, or help to draw her little carriage up and down the lime avenue. He was not slow to observe
the tenderness of Grace towards his favourite sister, and had in consequence conceived a strong affection for her, which manifested itself sometimes to her annoyance, in drawing comparisons between her and his sisters, Charlotte and Augusta, not much to the advantage of those young ladies; by which he not only got himself into hot water, which would not have signified, since it seemed to be rather his element, but Grace came in for a share of the scalding.

There was no danger of this, however, at the present time. And never had Grace been so happy at Ashby as during those midsummer holidays. She had a weakness for schoolboys (I cannot say I have. They are apt to be peculiarly obnoxious to middle-aged gentlemen.) She looked upon them with indulgent eyes;

"Was to their virtues very kind,
And to their faults a little blind."

and she had a genius for them; probably the sole companionship of her brother had taught her the art of interesting them. All the Markham boys, the hobble-de-hoy Philip, and the sulky Tom, as well as Charlie, who was in my opinion the only endurable one, owned her gentle influence; and the young cubs crouched at her feet as the lion at Una's.

Even Fanny and Julia shone with reflected light—their faults appeared to be in abeyance, and Charlie confided to Miss Hyndford that he should have some hopes of them, especially of Fanny, "if mother would only stay in London, and leave them to you and Grace Livingstone."

They were sitting one beautiful evening in the lime-tree avenue, a green drive which led out of the flower-garden, and was Ellen's favourite resting-place, where they often had
tea; all were in gay good humour, Grace teaching Julia and the boys to sing rounds and catches; Ellen and Fanny busily engaged in making a waxen copy of a water-lily. Miss Hyndford had just left them to write a letter.

"Halloa!" cried Charlie, breaking off in the middle of 'Christ-church Bells,' "what's that row at the stables? There's somebody screeching like mad. Don't you hear it, Phil?" and off he started, followed by his brothers, in the direction whence the noise proceeded. A few minutes afterwards he reappeared, pale and breathless.

"Run!—run for your lives!—a mad dog, a mad dog!" and catching the handle of Ellen's carriage, he dashed on towards the house. The rabid animal was already upon them, pursued by a host of men and boys, who only goaded it to wilder fury, while they were too far off to be of any service to those on whom its rage was directed.
Fanny, quick and agile, sprang on a chair, and swung herself up into the overhanging tree. Julia, paralyzed with terror, stood motionless. Grace might have easily saved herself as Fanny had done; but she could not leave that helpless victim. Her only weapon of defence was a parasol which lay on the bench, and beside it a shawl which had been brought out to lay over Ellen's feet; with these she confronted the dog, as it sprang at the terrified child, and blindly thrusting the parasol at its open jaws, by a happy chance she aimed aright. Those fearful fangs closed on Grace's weapon, and at the same time she flung the shawl over the brute's head, effectually muzzling it for the moment. Philip sprang forward and caught up his sister, and in another second the poor dog was pinned to the earth with pitchforks, but not before he had disengaged himself, and caught Grace just above the
ankle. She felt the sharp gripe of his teeth, and a sickening shudder passed through her at the idea of the horrible fate which too probably awaited her. She did not, however, lose her presence of mind; turning to one of the men who stood by, she begged him to ride instantly for the doctor, and tell him what had happened; and was then moving towards the house, when she was pushed into a seat, felt her foot forcibly seized, and looking down, beheld Fanny kneeling on the grass, with her lips applied to the wound.

"My dear child," cried Grace, trying to draw away her foot, but Fanny held on tight.

"Oh!—let me—oh—it won't—oh—hurt me—oh, you know—Queen Eleanor—oh—cousin Grace—oh, you'll go mad—oh—"

And with this consolatory assurance, Fanny continued her suction.

By this time all the servants in the house had gathered round her, the maids weeping
and lamenting, suggesting all manner of impracticable remedies, and prognosticating inevitably fatal results; when Sir Ralph’s old stud groom appeared, forcing his way through the crowd, and bearing aloft a red-hot firing iron.

“If Miss would let me, I knows this would make all safe. I seen it done by doctor—it won’t hurt—not much. Do like a dear Miss. Hold up, Miss Fanny,” and Grace making no resistance, for she believed the old man’s advice was good, Joseph cauterized the wound with as much skill and care as if he had been operating on Sir Ralph’s best hunter. He could not have done more.

“It’s but a lile nip; keep up t’ heart, like a brave lady as thou is. Lord love her! to see her facing t’ mad tyke as steady as ould Ladybird takes her fences. It war a sight, surely!”
What with the fright, the excitement, and the pain, which—Joe's assurances to the contrary notwithstanding—was pretty severe, Grace felt rather sick; and she was making the best of her way towards the house, when she was arrested by the sight of Ellen's carriage overturned on the lawn, and Charlie supporting her lifeless body in his arms, and calling for help. In his agonised haste to drag her out of danger, he had brought up the wheel of her little carriage against a bank of turf, by which it had been upset, and poor Ellen thrown out. Fortunately she had rather rolled than fallen on a heap of mown grass; but the shock was too much for her fragile frame, and she had fainted. Charlie thought she was dead.

"Oh, Grace! Grace! come, come quick; I have killed her; Oh, come and help me to carry her in."

What a sight for poor Miss Hyndford,
who had left them not a quarter of an hour before, singing in the gaiety of their hearts, to return and find her beloved nurseling lying motionless on the ground, disorder and dismay depicted in every face of the group which surrounded her, and the ominous words, "Mad dog," repeated in answer to her looks of anxious inquiry. Her first thought and care was for Ellen. Passing a sheet under her, she laid her on the mattress of her carriage, and had her borne into the house, and put to bed. It was no unusual thing for the little invalid to faint, and remedies were at hand. In a little while the death-like pallor passed away, the blue eyes unclosed; she looked around and smiled.

"I have been asleep and dreaming surely. I thought we were all in the lime avenue. What was that noise? Oh, I remember it all now—the mad dog! Charlie—oh, where is Charlie?" she uttered the last words in terrified accents.
"Here I am, my pet; don't be frightened, it's all right; the dog is killed, and nobody is hurt."

"Why are you crying, Charlie? Where is cousin Grace? where are Fanny and Julia, and brothers?"

"Everybody is safe, my darling," said Miss Hyndford. "Now you must be still; but tell me first, have you any pain anywhere, more than usual?"

"No, not any. But why does Charlie cry?"

"He thought you were hurt. He will not cry any more now, unless for joy. Now you must try to sleep. Charlie, kiss her, and say good night."

How fondly the little wasted arms were twined around that dear brother's neck, as he stooped to kiss her again and again.

"Dear Charlie! you saved us. I am quite well now. Good night."

The doctor declared that Joe Thorpe had
forestalled him; no more effectual remedy could have been resorted to. He contented himself with prescribing a sedative and a few days' quiet. Miss Hyndford sent for Dr. Frewen, who reassured her regarding little Ellen; no injury was apparent, and he did not think it likely that any had been received. But whether he was mistaken, or whether the shock only hastened what was more slowly but surely approaching, from that day she drooped. Restless, feverish nights, and weary days, brought down her strength rapidly; and before the holidays ended, it became very evident that Charlie and Ellen would never meet again.

The poor boy, though he could not bear to admit the truth, yet seemed to have a misgiving. He hardly ever left her bedside, and his grief at parting with her, to return to school, was most affecting. She was either unconscious of her state, or feared to
pain him by alluding to it. Most likely the latter motive kept her silent, for Ellen could not bear to give pain to any living being, least of all to Charlie. And to Grace she spoke frequently of death, as the probable result of her illness, though she did not say she felt it was at hand.

"You know, cousin Grace, I never can be like other people—I never can do any good in the world, so it is far better that I should die."

"Do not say that you can do no good, my little Ellen; you can show an example of patience and submission to God's will. Remember:

"They also serve

Who stand and wait."

"If it should please God to keep you here, you may be sure He has a work for you to do."
"I know that; but I mean it seems to me best that I should die while I am little. I give trouble enough now, being so helpless; but if I were a big woman I should be more troublesome."

"We do not count it trouble to wait on those we love; and those who love you now will not cease to love you when you cease to be little."

"But, cousin Grace, I have a better reason for being glad to die: I love you very much, and Miss Hyndford, and dear, dear Charlie, and the others too—I love them all; but I hope now that I love God more than all; and though I am sorry to leave you for a little while, it is joyful to think of going to Him and Jesus."

"Are you content to live or die?"

"Yes, I think I am; but I would like best to die before I am old. It is leaving Charlie that is the worst, for Miss Hyndford and
you know it is best for me to die; and Miss Hyndford told me she would not ask to keep me here—but Charlie loves me so, and he will miss me, and he has not learned all that you have learned; and then, he is a boy now, but when I see him in heaven, perhaps he will be an old man and I shall still be a child."

It was a childlike thought.

"There will be perfect happiness in heaven, darling," said Grace; "we need not trouble ourselves with difficulties about how it is to be."

"But do not you think, cousin Grace, that we shall know each other in heaven? Oh! I hope we shall. Please repeat that sonnet of Bishop Mant's, that you wrote for me in my little book."

Grace repeated:

"There is a void in torn affection's heart,
That yearns to be supplied, on God's high will
Though it repose submissively. Yet still
Of those who bore in its regards a part.
The cherished forms it holds as in a chart
Depicted—hoping He will yet fulfil
Their restitution. Pardon it, if ill
Lurk in this hope. Great Father! true Thou art,
Thou sayest the just shall bliss in fulness prove;
And what Thou sayest, Thy goodness will provide.
But yet, me seems, the blissful souls above,
The sense of earth's sweet charities denied,
Would feel a yearning in those realms of love,
By patriarch host and angels unsupplied."

"Oh! that is so beautiful, and I feel it is true, cousin Grace."

"I hope it is, darling; but 'the secret things belong unto the Lord,' we must not ask to know what He has hidden, or set our hearts on anything He has not plainly promised."

"You love Charlie, cousin Grace?"

"Indeed I do, Ellen."

"Will you always love him, and be kind
to him, and tell him when he does wrong? Oh! I pray that God may bless him and give him a new heart, and make him good and happy."

Little Ellen's prayer was heard, and the strong desire of her heart was granted. She died before that summer's flowers had faded, and the memory of her suffering life and early death was made a blessing to the brother she loved so dearly.

God gave him a new heart.

Miss Hyndford and Grace were with her when her spirit passed away so peacefully—so painlessly, it was indeed but falling asleep.

They both missed her sorely. To one she had been as her own child, to the other the object of tender affection; but they knew it was best for her to die young.

Grace was aware that Miss Hyndford would not remain at Ashby now that little
Ellen needed her care no longer. They had talked of this before; and much as, for her own sake, Grace regretted it, she thought Miss Hyndford judged rightly.

"If I thought I could be of use to my pupils," said she, "I hope the fact of my task being a difficult one would not deter me from pursuing it; but I foresee such obstacles as appear to me insuperable, and I have already tried every method with Fanny in vain. Julia is, if possible, more impracticable; there is a dogged hardness about her, more hopeless than Fanny's levity. Fanny has affections, which may be touched if not secured; Julia's, if she have any, I have failed to reach. Yet, when I think they are my little Ellen's sisters, I can hardly make up my mind to leave them—Ellen's sisters!" repeated Miss Hyndford, as attracted by the sound of loud voices in the young ladies' room; they stopped and beheld Fanny with
a muslin frill round her face, appealing to the maid who was trying on her black frock, to observe how well she would look as a widow, while Julia peevishly exclaimed:

"How can you be so foolish, Fanny? I am sure these frocks are hideous enough; you need not try to disfigure yourself more. How long are we to wear this frightful mourning, I wonder?"

"Oh, a month or six weeks, I suppose; poor little Ellen was such a child, and nobody knew much about her except ourselves; besides, mamma and sisters hate to wear mourning."

Ellen's sisters!

"My difficulties are at an end, Miss Livingstone" said Miss Hyndford two days afterwards, "I have a letter from Lady Markham, informing me that she has decided on sending Fanny and Julia to a school
in London, and has, therefore, no longer any occasion for my services. I am very thankful for this; it relieves me of what I felt to be a painful necessity."

"Then I am glad of it too, dear Miss Hyndford. I hope," added Grace, "my aunt writes you a kind letter."

"Lady Markham is not a person of many words. I know she is satisfied that I have endeavoured to do my duty, not only to my darling Ellen, but to her other children; that she does not consider me well suited to them, is only a confirmation of my own opinion."

"I wonder who will be found to suit them then," said Grace.

"A good school may be of use to Fanny, at least, it will oblige her to be diligent and orderly."

"But her love of gossip and tittle-tattle?"

"That will require strict surveillance; there
are schools where gossiping is not only prohibited, but effectually prevented."

"Does my aunt mention what school she has fixed upon?"

"She does not."

"And your own plans, dear Miss Hyndford, what are they?"

"I shall go home for a little while. I do not feel as though I could enter upon a new scene just yet."

"I always think," said Grace, after a pause, "I always think the most trying condition of your lot must be the inevitable change of home. Under the happiest circumstances, more especially, indeed, when you have been very happy, to leave those who have grown up under your care and begin again at the bottom of the ladder, must be very disheartening."

"You judge rightly, Miss Livingstone, it is the hardest condition of our calling, at least
it is the one which we cannot escape; in other respects we can do much to make or mar our own happiness."

"Not always, surely?"

"More frequently than people imagine, or than governesses generally will allow. There are some extreme cases, in which the lot of a governess is hard indeed, but on the average I think we have much to be thankful for. I believe I have said this to you before, Miss Livingstone?"

"Yes; but I should like to hear your views more fully; in what particulars do you think you are the rulers of your own happiness?"

"In the first place, by respecting the office. So many of my sisterhood are ashamed of their vocation, which, surely, is as high and honourable a one as a woman, not having children of her own, need desire. We can never perform cheerfully that which we feel
to be a degradation; and I think the woman who is ashamed of being a governess had better seek any other lawful means of gaining her bread. She may be ashamed of sewing for her livelihood, yet handle her needle with skill; but if she is ashamed of teaching, she will do more harm than good. Another error into which a governess is apt to fall, is to expect too much attention, and to feel aggrieved when it is withheld. Doubtless the kind consideration which in some families is shown to the governess is very gratifying, and puts a heart into one's duty most beneficial to teacher and taught; but one must take care not to be spoiled by it, not to be disheartened if it is not always met with. Considerate people will always be exceptions; much real kindness of heart may exist in people of cold, undemonstrative manner, or heedless natures; and even if it does not, positive unkindness is rare—more rare than its
opposite. And there is always some compensation in this our lot is the lot of humanity. I must say, however, that I believe I have been favoured above my fellows. I have never had an uncomfortable situation. I have always met with kindness."

"Always?" said Grace enquiringly, who had been witness to no small discourtesy, as she considered it, on the part of Lady Markham, and her elder daughters, towards Miss Hyndford.

"I understand your inquiry, Miss Livingstone, and I admit, that on first coming here from Invercarron, I felt the change; but I have had nothing, excepting coldness, to complain of, and that I have already said, I do not admit as legitimate cause of complaint; and here I have known some of the happiest hours of life, by the bed-side of the blessed little one, whose sweet patience might well teach a lesson to many an elder heart."
I had her love, warm, and pure, and perfect. I had the comfort of knowing I made her happy. What more could I ask? yet more was given. You will not think me obtrusive in saying to you now, dear Miss Livingstone, when we are so soon to part, how great a happiness your society—may I not say your friendship?—has afforded me; and more than happiness—it has taught me how much sorrow may be borne patiently, cheerfully, by a trusting heart. You have been more heavily tried than I have been. You have not, like me, a distinct work plainly pointed out; yet are you content to follow, step by step, where your Father leads. Oh my dear Miss Livingston, may He be pleased soon to lead you through green pastures of gladness, and beside the still waters of peace, and give you happiness here and hereafter! I can never forget you, or cease to think of you with deep and grateful affection."
"Do not speak of gratitude to me, Miss Hyndford; I owe you much. To you and my darling Ellen, I owe almost all the happiness I have known since I was left alone in the world: and I thankfully acknowledge I have had many sweet and peaceful hours in this room, especially of late. How much I shall miss you."
CHAPTER VIII.

Refusing to the last, to believe that her neglected child was in any peril of life, Lady Markham had not thought it necessary to hasten her departure from London. Even upon Miss Hyndford's reports of Ellen's increasing illness, and when the fact of her death admitted of no denial, I do not believe that one touch of remorse or tenderness visited the unnatural mother's heart. At another time it would have been hailed as a relief; but just now it happened most inopportune.
were other peers besides Lord Beaumaris, who had gone off, nobody knew where. The Earl of Biggleswade was not so young or so handsome as the Marquis; but his rent-roll was larger, and the family diamonds of were of fabulous value; he was evidently much smitten, and had accepted an invitation to Ashby, where his visit could not now be received.

What a chance to lose!

It seemed as if poor little Ellen's death gave as little satisfaction as her life had done,—to her mother.

Can there be a more humiliating proof of what humanity may descend into, than an unnatural mother; harder of heart than the beasts than perish; devoid of the instinct of maternity.

And as sweetest wine makes the strongest vinegar, so a mother's hate is as intense as mother's love can be. Happily, such cases are of the rarest, but there are such.
It may be said, that this does not apply to Lady Markham, who seemed to have a blind adoration for her elder daughters, especially for Augusta, and would see no fault in Fanny or Julia; but I doubt whether this were love. She took pride in the beauty and accomplishments of these children; they were admired and courted in that world where it was her ambition to shine, and through their means, she hoped to connect herself with nobility. For her sons, she cared very little; and it is hardly too much to say, that she arrived at hating poor little Ellen—and more now that she was dead than while she lived—partly because this interfered, as we have seen, with her favourite scheme; partly because it was a tacit reproof of her neglect; partly that it called for a semblance, at least, of decent sorrow; her hard, proud, unyielding heart, chafed under the dispensation which might have carried a
message of mercy to a less impenetrable spirit.

In no gentle mood did she return to Ashby, and there the sight of those who had fulfilled her duty to the little outcast from a mother's love only aggravated the bitterness of her anger. With Miss Hyndford she controlled herself, thanked her coldly for her attention to the poor little girl, but begged that Ellen's name might not be mentioned to her, as she felt quite unequal to talk of her, and told Miss Hyndford that she was at liberty to go home as soon as she pleased, since she had arranged to send Fanny and Julia to school immediately. But to Grace, whom she felt was in her power, she had already committed herself, by a display of her real feelings.

One part of her persecution was an attempt to force Grace into a marriage with
a Mr. Ramsden, a man every way her inferior—the dissipated, would-be fine gentleman, son of a Lichfield attorney, who bid fair to squander the fortune his father had amassed honestly or otherwise. When Grace declined positively, and at length, with some indignation, the pertinacious addresses of her unabashed suitor: she had to undergo the most stinging taunts from Lady Markham, as one who was content to live on the charity of those on whom she had no claim by blood.

But a day of reckoning was at hand.

Sir Ralph's fortune had been large; but when a man whose rent-roll numbers eleven thousand a year lives at the rate of twelve, the consequences, sooner or later, must be a crash.

Sir Ralph was not a man of business; he believed himself to be possessed of ready
money sufficient to cover any little extra expense in which he might indulge; and what his expenses were he had no very accurate idea. The failure of a country bank necessitated an inquiry into the state of his affairs, and then it was found that only by the sale of his unentailed property, by abandoning Ashby, and economising rigidly for several years, could he hope to make any provision for the children of his second marriage. Ralph, who did not love his step-mother, as he had little reason, was not likely to make any sacrifices for her behoof; so there was no alternative.

Sir Ralph was an honest man; this sacrifice he was called upon to make, was to one of his habits, very great—but he did not hesitate.

To Lady Markham and her daughters, the blow was tremendous; and poor Sir Ralph gained little comfort from his wife.
That so worldly wise a woman as Lady Markham should have suffered her interests to be entirely overlooked, may appear extraordinary; but the truth is, she had reckoned on the possession of the £30,000, which had gone with the bank and on the place in Northamptonshire, as her dower-house. This she believed to be secured to her, but she had been mistaken. It was a desperate downfall. And what was to become of Grace?

This was a question which Sir Ralph propounded to his lady with more thoughtfulness, than might have been expected from a man like him, oppressed by sudden calamity.

"What's to become of the poor girl, Lady Markham? I would like to do something better for her than to let her follow our fortunes; but I hardly know what else to propose."
"If you mean that she should go abroad with us, Sir Ralph, I tell you at once that I will not consent to it; she has been too long with us already; I wish to goodness she had never come," said Lady Markham, careless then of betraying her feelings.

"What do you mean, Charlotte?" said Sir Ralph, in angry surprise.

"I mean that she has been a thorn in my side ever since she entered the house, an incubus to which I will submit no longer. But for her, Augusta might have been married to Lord Beaumaris; and if I am not much mistaken, she came between Charlotte and Mr. Dalton."

"And so, because the girl is a pretty girl, and as good as she is pretty; and young men have the sense to find it out, you would visit it upon her as a crime! Upon my soul!—the envy and jealousy of women is beyond all belief. I wish Char-
lotte and Augusta were more like Grace Livingstone, and I shouldn't care whether they were married or not."

"If you are so anxious to have her for a daughter, I dare say you will soon be gratified. Lord Beaumaris does not seem inclined to renew his addresses; so I have little doubt Miss Livingstone may be induced to bestow her pretty face and empty purse on your son and heir; and then you will have no farther anxiety about her welfare, which appears to be of much more importance to you than that of your own family."

"Ralph will be a lucky fellow if he gets her, and he shall have my blessing; but I believe your news is too good to be true."

So that shaft fell harmless.

Now if there was one prospect more hateful to her ladyship than another, it was to have Grace; to whom she had shewn
so much unkindness, and consequently whom she so intensely disliked, as her daughter-in-law, who would at once be independent of her, and hereafter would rule in her stead. Ralph Markham had for some time shewn symptoms of admiration for Grace. There was evidently a powerful attraction which kept him at Ashby, where there was neither hunting nor shooting, and Sir Ralph was ready to encourage this; it was intolerable.

She was too angry to speak.

"I'll tell you what, Lady Markham, you know who her nearest relations are. There is old Lady Livingstone, surely she would take her, if you were to write, and tell her how things stand with us."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. I am not going to publish our ruin, or to put myself under obligation to any one, on account of a girl who is no relation of mine."
"What obligations are you talking of?"

"Why, asking Lady Livingstone to receive Grace."

"Then what, in Heaven's name, do you propose to do? Leave the girl on the high road?"

"I shall make arrangements to board her with the Miss Wingroves, until she comes of age, and then my responsibility ceases."

"Board her with the d—l," said Sir Ralph, kicking down the fire-irons, and otherwise evincing signs of the most violent displeasure. "Condemn the poor girl to the society of those sour old maids, who would worry the life out of an angel. How would you like such a thing to be proposed for your own daughter, Lady Markham? No, I have a responsibility in this, as well as you, and if you won't write to Lady Livingstone, I'll write myself. I'll not see poor Glenruth's daughter turned over in that way, while I can help it."
It might at first sight seem difficult to say why Lady Markham made any difficulty about recommending Grace to the care of her Scotch relations, unless from pure grudging, at the idea of her finding a happy home; and doubtless this motive would have been sufficient—to such a height will hatred grow, if nursed and cherished. But she had another reason.

After spreading reports of Grace's tendency to insanity (for Lady Beaumaris was not the only person to whom the secret had been confided), she would have compromised herself, by proposing to Lady Livingstone to receive Grace and her family. While, by placing her with the Miss Wingroves in a conveniently obscure country town, and duly instructing these ladies, not only would her machinations escape detection, but their success would be ensured.

She was rather disquieted by Sir Ralph's
declaration, that he would write to Lady Livingstone; but she remembered that the Invercarron family had gone to Italy for the winter, and took comfort.

Meanwhile, another idea had suggested itself to Grace. She was truly sorry for her aunt and cousins, and especially so for Sir Ralph. To Augusta she did not venture to express her feelings; but one day, when Charlotte was in a mild mood, Grace put her arms round her neck, and told her, with tears, how deeply she felt for them, how much she wished to be of use to them, if possible.

"What is to become of Fanny and Julia? Can they remain at Mrs. Everett's?"

"No; papa says it is impossible, and equally so to have an expensive governess for them; and how we are to manage them without a governess, Heaven only knows."

"Do you think my aunt would let me
undertake the management of them for the next two years? In some things, I think, with your help I could carry them on, and they will have advantages abroad as to languages. Dear Charlotte! if you knew how willingly I would do anything to be useful; and your sisters know me—we were such good friends in summer."

"Grace, do you mean to say you would undertake such a drudgery! and after all mamma's—well I do think you are the most forgiving of human beings. No, no, Grace don't come with us, go to those who will find out your value. Perhaps you have not heard papa's proposal to send you to your namesakes in Scotland."

"I know he kindly proposes writing to Lady Livingstone on the subject. But, Charlotte, your father's house has been my home since I ceased to have one of my own. If I can in any degree repay his hospitality,
it will be my pleasure, no less than my duty to do so."

She was too honest to speak of her aunt's hospitality, but she was truly grateful to Sir Ralph, whose moistened eye, as he thanked her for her tenderness shown to his little Elllen, had given evidence of his kind heart. His impulses were good, but they were too often overpowered by an indolent love of ease, which made him shrink from battling a point with his wife. She seldom, if ever, interfered with his pursuits and amusements, and he was content to let her bear rule, without inquiring too narrowly how that rule was administered.

When he was roused he could hold his own, and he determined to write to Lady Livingstone.

He was beginning to see many things more clearly.

When Charlotte, deeply touched by the
proof Grace had given of generous disregard of self, told her parents of it. Sir Ralph heard it with emotion, Lady Markham with a sneer. She was invulnerable; yet, on second thoughts, seeing the manifest advantage to Fanny and Julia, of such an arrangement, she was half inclined to close with Grace's offer, but Sir Ralph put a veto on that at once.

"No, no! God bless her for the thought! But Lord Glenruth's daughter would be out of place as governess to mine. If I can no longer give her a home, I hope I can at least find one for her."

Poor Sir Ralph, however, was not permitted to carry out his kind attention. Riding home from L——one night, after a day spent in painful and harassing business, he got wet to the skin, as he had done with impunity a hundred times; but now there was enemy within. Anxious and dispirited,
illness found him an easier prey; but its first symptoms were neglected, and when at last medical advice was sought it, was of no avail. Within ten days, he who had scarcely known a day’s illness in his life, died of pleurisy.

Grace tended him with all the affection, and more than the skill and patience of his own daughters. She was apprehensive from the first, Lady Markham would not believe in danger till all was over; and then her’s was an angry grief—for grieve she did. In her way she had been attached to Sir Ralph, but there was a great deal of selfishness mingled with her sorrow. That it did not soften her heart towards Grace, will be seen from the fact, that instead of carrying out her husband’s intention of writing to Lady Livingstone, she took steps towards placing her with the Miss Wingroves; and when, in a letter of condolence, Lady Beaumaris inquired
whether under these sadly-altered circumstances, Miss Livingstone would continue to live with her aunt. She replied that she had found it quite necessary to provide her with another asylum, as she dreaded for her the excitement of travelling; and "in case of any more violent outbreak, how helpless should I feel with so precious a charge, at a distance from home, a desolate and heart-stricken widow!"

(In the depth of her grief Lady Markham never forgot her notes of admiration.)

"She is to be under the surveillance of a physician, eminent for his skilful treatment of mental maladies, and the Miss Wingroves house is so quiet, that it is just the home for my beloved niece; and the consciousness that I have done the best that could be done for her, dear child! repays me for the anxiety she has cost me, and the painful exertions I have been called upon to
make for her sake, at such a time as this!"

Lady Markham, however, was checkmated. Charlotte, who knew what her poor father’s intentions had been, was resolved that they should not be frustrated; so she wrote to Lady Livingstone, explaining the circumstances of her family, as a sufficient apology for her mother’s silence.

I think Grace might probably have been stirred up to appeal to Lady Livingstone, herself, but she believed her to be on the continent. Not having heard of the Invercarron family since Miss Hyndford’s departure, who had herself accompanied a family abroad, she did not know that the project of wintering in Italy had been abandoned in consequence of Colonel and Mrs. Livingstone’s arrival in England sooner than they were expected; so that Charlotte’s letter, which, in ignorance of their foreign address
she had directed to Invercarron to be forwarded, was received by Lady Livingstone there, and answered immediately. The letter to Charlotte enclosed one for Grace; so kindly, yet so simply worded, that its sincerity could not be doubted. She was welcome at Invercarron, and the sooner the better.

Grace's surprise and gratitude may be imagined.

She remained, however, at Ashby as long as she thought she could be of the slightest use; and she was of more use in her quiet, unobtrusive way than any of them excepting Charlotte, knew, until they found out on her departure how much they missed her; but when one day young Sir Ralph was very urgent with her to remain altogether, she thought it was time to go.

It was with a strange mixture of feeling that she quitted the place which had been
called her home for the last twelvemonth, knowing that probably she should never see it again. Regret may seem hardly natural, considering the treatment she had experienced, yet regret there was. Had she been leaving its inmates prosperous as she found them, probably she would have been conscious only of joy at her emancipation from thraldom, but misfortune had lowered upon Ashby: death had visited it; and Grace's generous, tender heart, almost reproached itself for the joy it could not help feeling. She was leaving a falling house.

Oh, Lady Markham! you had been entertaining an angel unaware—sorry entertainment you gave; but had you even abstained from insult, what a tenfold reward you might have reaped now. Even at the eleventh hour one word of contrition—one sign of relenting, and she would have devoted herself to the work of comforting you, and
found her happiness therein. It was her nature so to do. Every wrong would have been forgotten, and in serving you she would have learned to love; but you cast her out.

I can't help being very glad it was so. Had Grace Livingstone gone with the Markhams to Brussels, I probably should never have seen her; and possibly this book might not have been written. Let us be thankful!

Then she was going to Invercarron, which for so many months had been the scene of some of her pleasantest day-dreams; the happy home which Miss Hyndford had so often described, and she had pictured to herself with a vain longing to be one of its inmates; and now the vision was taking form and reality. She was going among her kindred, who would welcome her as such. She would no longer be regarded as an alien. It is indescribable the pleasure she took in reflecting on that slender tie of relationship, which in England would hardly
have been recognised as such; but Grace had none more strong, and valued her relatives as *rari aves*. She did not trouble herself with speculation as to whether or not they would love her; she knew they were kind, and that she should love them, and that was sufficient for her present happiness. Of affection, as of less precious treasures, how truly it may be said that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Going back to Scotland—that in itself was happiness inexpressible.

For her eye, accustomed to the mountain scenery of Glenruth, had grown weary of the tame beauties of ——shire. Its flat meadows and sluggish streams, with their everlasting willows and poplars, even it must be owned, of its fine oaks.

She had often pined for a glimpse of rock or heather, a bare hill-side or a brown moor; the red rugged bole of a fir tree, or the silver sheen of the lady of the woods, or for the
sweet sound of rushing waters, which was as music to her ear.

She thought of Edward—when did she not think of him—how his kind heart would rejoice to hear of her having found such a home; for although she had never told him of her unhappiness at Ashby, she meant to write him a description of Invercarron; she hoped, too—and there was a little tremour mingled with the hope—that she would sometimes hear him named there, to some of the family at least he was well known; and probably Colonel Livingstone, lately from India, had met him. (It is a generally received opinion that in India people cannot fail to meet.) And Katherine—that dear warm-hearted clever Katherine—would be as a sister to her.

If her reflections were somewhat grave and mournful, her anticipations were for the present steeped in sunshine—let us hope they were not delusive.
CHAPTER IX.

There was high feasting at Glenruth on the anniversary of that day which had seen its last lord carried to the grave, for after an interval of several years another heir to its honours was born. This was a blessing much coveted by the present peer, for his only son was but a sickly plant; and the birth of a second, besides strengthening the house, might enable him to break the entail in favour of his daughters, and thus keep the property at least in his branch of the family, even should their brothers die childless.
But although he determined to make this sure, if possible, he was far from anticipating any such contingency, as he looked with paternal pride and satisfaction on the strong healthy infant with which her ladyship had so kindly presented him, and who seemed as likely as any one to live and thrive, and perpetuate the race of Livingstone.

His Lordship was highly elated, and on the occasion of the Honourable Algernon Reginald’s christening, great were the rejoicings at Glenruth, worthy indeed of the birth of an heir apparent, instead of a younger brother. But the truth was, that as heir apparent the new-born one was regarded; and except when his signature was required for some deed or bond, Lord Glenruth seldom thought of his eldest son, who, neglected from his earliest years as long as there seemed hope of more promising children, and brought into notice only since he
had become Master of Glenruth, and—faute de mieux—the future Baron was destined henceforth to sink back into obscurity. Such treatment would have been galling to a proud spirit; but Basil Livingstone, though sensitive, and keenly alive to kindness, was not proud. Aware of his peculiar appearance, and of the disadvantage at which he was placed by a very defective education, he seemed to take it for granted that all others should be preferred to him; and it was very touching to see the affectionate gentleness with which he caressed the baby brother who seemed destined to supplant him. Poor Basil! that frail slight frame held as pure and noble and tender a heart as ever beat in the manliest breast. Well would it have been if some of earth’s more favoured ones had possessed one-half his worth.

It was difficult to say what it was in his appearance that impressed one so painfully at
first. He was neither deformed nor dwarfish, nor was there any distortion of feature in his pale mild face; but altogether there was something unearthly in his look. So spare was the slender frame, and so colourless the hollow cheek and sunken eye, and soft infant-like hair which covered the small head. There was about him an indescribable look of youth and age. You thought at first a delicate stripling was before you. You looked again, and seemed to see a man stricken in years; and from his boyhood till his death no change was observable in his appearance.

It was impossible but that he should be loved by those who knew and could appreciate his character—in his youth these were but a few, for few did know what he was. As years elapsed, and he was called upon to take a more prominent position in life, he made many warm and constant friends,
and won the respect and admiration of all. At this time his eldest sister, the only child besides himself, of his father's first marriage, was perhaps the only human being who knew him thoroughly; but her affection was worth many friendships—the strong tie which so often unites an only brother and sister was drawn very close between these two.

Had their own mother lived, these loving hearts might have known a happier childhood; but the second Mrs. Livingstone, though not intentionally or positively unkind, was ill-fitted to supply her place. She was a person of extremely narrow mind and limited capacities, who considered it a sacred duty to love her own children immeasurably above those who had not the privilege of calling her their mother; and she had so little delicacy of feeling as to lament openly and frequently, especially since she had become
Lady Glenruth, that she had no son, as it was so very desirable that there should be an heir to the title, thus tacitly ignoring the existence of Basil. I believe she viewed the birth of this much-desired son in the light of a national blessing; so she called her friends and neighbours and the public generally, to rejoice with her.

So there was a grand dinner at Glenruth to high and low, and much speaking and drinking of healths; and when at last the company rose to disperse, Basil, who thought old Dr. Grahame might naturally feel slighted by the selection of another clergyman to administer the baptismal right, without so much as paying him the compliment of naming such an intention, Basil, with the tact natural to his kind heart, proposed to walk home with him.

"I am afraid," began he, when they had left the house, "I am afraid this must have
been a trying day to you, my dear Sir. I was glad," he added with some hesitation, "when my father determined to ask Mr. Williamson to take your place, it would have been too much to expect of you."

Dr. Grahame saw through the kind disguise, and quickly replied:

"Indeed, Mr. Livingstone, I felt it would have been so, and I am not afraid of owning it to you. Most sincerely I pray for God's blessing on the little one who has this day been dedicated to Him; but when I think of those on whose heads I poured the waters of baptism, and saw grow up in goodness and beauty under that roof tree—the one laid low in death, the other bowed down under sorrow—I cannot always command my feelings. It is just twelve months this day, since I followed to the grave the honoured friend of many years."

"I remember it," said Basil; "but I
think it had escaped my father's memory, and I did not like to remind him of it when all his arrangements were made."

"My dear Mr. Livingstone," said Dr. Grahame, "it is as natural for your father to rejoice to-day as it was for me on that day to mourn. Joy and sorrow come alike from Him who knows what all his servants need: that brought a blessing to her on whom it fell, and so I trust will this."

"Have you heard lately from Miss Livingstone?" said Basil after a pause. "I hope she is well?"

"A month never passes without bringing me a letter from her," answered the Doctor in a pleased tone. "She knows I like well to hear from her, and she is not one to forget old friends; she is in good health, and writes cheerfully for most part; but I sometimes doubt it's not a very kindly home she's got to. I wish she could have gone to Mrs. Onslow."
‘Who is Mrs. Onslow? Is she a relation?’

‘No, not any kin; but she is a kind lady that I mind of being at Glenruth different times with her husband, the Dean, an excellent worthy man, but a terrible strong prelate.’

‘Would not you be afraid, Doctor, that he might be converting Miss Grace if she went to live there?’

‘He’s gone, Sir, where he’ll not find any needing conversion,’ said the Doctor reverently. ‘His work was built on a sure foundation, and whatever be the work the foundation will stand. He was a good man and a Christian, and died rejoicing. May my end be like his. No, I don’t think Miss Grace will fall into prelacy; she has a wonderful clear sight of the truth, for as young as she is she can give a reason for the faith that is within her; and Mrs. Onslow, worthy
woman, is no great polemic, but the Dean loved an argument well.”

They had reached the Manse by this time.

“You’ll step in, Mr. Livingstone, and rest you a bit, you’ll have the moon this two hours yet. Aye, that’s her picture,” said he, seeing Basil’s eye attracted by the portrait of Grace which hung in the Manse parlour; “but her’s is a bonnier face than any painter could set down; then the gowden hair and the dark een, and the black lashes, but there’s not the smile that was like sunshine to an auld man’s heart; she was a bonnie lamb! a bonnie lamb!”

The old man’s eyes were full of tears, as they often were when he talked of his favourite Miss Grace—and in Basil he always found a ready listener, not only from his kind desire to give pleasure to Dr. Grahame, but from the interest he himself took in the subject. His feeling for Walter and Grace
was more like that of a sorrowing brother, than of the heir of their house; and joyfully, I am sure, he would have resigned his present prospects, could that have recalled to life him whose place he held. Once, for a moment, he had seen Grace, and she had made a great impression on him—not by her beauty so much as by her sorrow; but he did think her's the loveliest face he had ever beheld, and he was not singular in this. To know her, to win her friendship—her affection—for Annie, if not for himself—was a favourite vision which he had cherished ever since the day when his pity was so profoundly stirred; and the more he heard of her from Dr. Gra-hame, and from the people about Glenruth, the more earnest became this desire, until it grew almost into a passion. Poor Basil!
CHAPTER X.

"She had something of sublime
In eyes that sadly shone—as seraph's shine,
All youth—but with an aspect beyond time;
Radiant and grave, as pitying man's decline;
Mournful—but mournful for another's crime;
She looked like one who sat by Eden's door,
And grieve for those who might return no more."

BYRON.

"Oh! Katherine, Katherine! what pains I have bestowed upon you to no purpose. To think at your age, you have not learned to value people for their good qualities."

"Good qualities! I don't care for what you call good qualities," said Katherine, "I like people that amuse me."
"You can scarcely look for much amusement from poor Grace just now, considering all things," observed a quiet voice, apologetically, from the other side of the fire-place.

"That's just what I complain of. She will be dull, dull, and you and mamma will look solemn for sympathy, and I shall be afraid of her. I always am afraid of crape and weepers."

"Now, Katherine, I desire you will not speak in that way—it's perfectly dreadful; and I just beg you will lay yourself out to pay proper attention to Grace, and not be always thinking of your own amusement. It's your duty to amuse her."

"But some people won't be amused. I wonder if she's clever. Is she mamma!"

"Does anybody know if she's handsome?" inquired the tall young man who monopolised the rug in virtue of his sex and country.

"I've heard some one say she's stunning, but one never knows."

"I can't tell you whether she is the one or the other, but she is an excellent good girl, I believe; and her mother was very good-
looking as a young woman. Katherine, I hope you have got a piece of work to do in the evenings.”

This conversation was carried on at the fireside of an old country-house in Scotland. It aptly introduces some of my friends, the Livingstones, with whom I have spent many a happy summer's day, and winter's evening; they little dreaming, poor innocents—as how should they?—that they were cherishing a viper in the family bosom; in other words, that the obscure individual who sat in their chimney-corner would basely betray them into a book. And yet my intentions are honourable.

Lady Livingstone, at the time I speak of, had been for several years a widow. Married early, she had passed from a secluded girlhood into the cares and anxieties of wedded life, in her case neither few nor light. To maintain the dignity of an ancient name, and
to bring up a large family on an income barely sufficient to such requirements, was a task which few would have performed with like success. She was a woman of a mind rather strong than large; of warm and steadfast, but not passionate feelings, of strict religious principle, and strong sense of duty.

Undisturbed by doubts, and little apt to be swayed by impulse, she could not easily understand or make allowance for the difficulties and errors of minds less stable than her own. When I add, that her maternal affections were strong, and discernment of character very small, it may be conceived that her daughter Katherine, whom I shall presently describe, was a painful puzzle to her.

The youngest of thirteen, Katherine’s childhood had not received the same amount of maternal superintendence which fell to the lot of her elders; and being a child of very uncommon character, the untrained workings
of her mind had resulted in some very heterodox opinions, the bare suspicion of which would have startled Lady Livingstone's virtuous imagination from its propriety. But Katherine's mind was a sealed book to her mother—a book which, to those who had skill to read its pages, was full of deep and varied interest. Gifted, affectionate, generous and true—singularly free from feminine faults—she was the most loveable of beings, yet lacked she one thing, and this it was which made her an object of sorrowful affection to some who knew and loved her well. Wanting that anchor of the soul which is sure and steadfast, her spirit was tempest-tost on the dark waters of doubt; and afraid, or unable, to steer her course to the only haven of safety, there seemed but too much reason to fear that the frail bark might founder among the shoals and breakers of worldly pleasure and excitement. She lived but for
the present, and continually desired to be amused.

The gentleman whose interest in the expected stranger seemed to be centered on the subject of her personal charms, was John Livingstone, a handsome young Guardsman, with a tall figure of nearly faultless proportions, and a face which, if not strictly classical, was more pleasant to look upon than that of any Grecian statue I am acquainted with, so kindly was the beam of the clear eye, so sweet and sunny the smile. Manly and gentle, accomplished and most engaging in manners, it was no wonder that he was a favourite both with men and women, even with those who knew him slightly. His reserved and sensitive nature, not untinctured with pride, made it difficult to know him thoroughly; but by those who did, he was beloved, and by his sister, Katherine, almost worshipped. No one had so much
influence with her; and had his character possessed *all* that hers wanted, he would have been her best as he was her most affectionate and trusted, friend and counsellor.

The quiet voice in the corner was that of Mrs. Francis Livingstone, the wife of Lady Livingstone's fourth and favourite son, Colonel of Dragoons, and C.B., whom I shall presently have occasion to introduce to you, dear reader; but as he took no part in the foregoing conversation, my business is first with his wife.

Some people are most easily described by negatives. Magdalen Livingstone was neither handsome nor plain. She was not clever, she was not accomplished. She was neither tall nor short, nor dark nor fair. There was nothing remarkable about her, unless the quietness of her manners and movements might be called remarkable. She seldom made any impression on strangers,
yet few have possessed, in larger measure, the confidence of those to whom she was intimately known, however different their dispositions. I suppose it was that the neutral tints of her character harmonised alike with light and shadow; and that some who would have shrunk from the brightness of noon, or the gloom of night, found repose in the calm twilight.

Besides those already named, there were three sons and a married daughter. Sir Thomas commanded a frigate in the Mediterranean; Gilbert was settled in Australia; and Lady Dalrymple was with her husband, the British Minister at Florence. With them we shall have no opportunity of improving our acquaintance in the course of these reminiscences. George was in the Foreign Office: you will meet him at Invercarron next year.

The graves of Margaret and Eleanor were
in the old churchyard of Ardoch, and the names of Lewis and Hugh, James and Robert, might also be read there; but though these four sons had grown up to manhood, under the roof-tree of Invercarron,

"Their graves were severed far and wide,
By mount, and stream, and sea."

Well might Lady Livingstone's habitual expression be grave, even to melancholy; yet although the eye told of sorrow, and was often dim with tears, you might read in the calm brow and firmly closed mouth, that sorrow had been bravely met and patiently borne. Her cheek was very pale, but it was fair and smooth; nor did many threads of silver mingle with the dark hair braided beneath the widow's cap. Tall and erect, with the long neck, and small, well-placed head, which gives so much dignity to the figure, you would not have guessed her years
to have numbered nearly three score and ten. Yet she had already seen her sixty-seventh birthday.

"They ought to be here by this time," resumed John, after a pause. "Mother, do you mean to wait dinner for them?"

"Nonsense! who waits dinner for anybody now-a-days? they would much rather we didn't." This was Katherine, of course.

"Now just be quiet, Katherine; of course we must wait dinner. Poor Francis will be starving. I hope to goodness he has not been travelling on the box, and putting the maid inside."

"I should just think he has! Imagine Francis allowing any womankind to travel outside on a night like this! What do you say about waiting for them, Maudlin?"

"As your mother pleases, Kathie. Judging by myself, I should think Grace would willingly escape the ceremony to-night,
and Francis can have something afterwards."

"Well, what do you say, mother?" asked John. "Magdalen thinks we had better not wait. They'll have a far better dinner, you know, if they get a beefsteak done for themselves, instead of coming in for ours reduced to cinders."

The knotty point was settled by the arrival of the travellers. There was the usual bustle. All the doors in the house seemed to open and shut, and all the bells to ring sympathetically. There was a moment's lull, and Colonel Livingstone entered the room, leading his young cousin.

It was my first sight of that face which lives in my memory, as the most beautiful I ever looked upon. Yet it was not at once, that one was aware of its perfection of form and feature. It was the expression—gentle without weakness—noble without pride—
serious and serene—savouring less of earth than heaven, realising one's idea of a ministering angel—this was what filled the eye at first. After looking again and again, one perceived the classic purity of the features.

The brow was of that form which leaves the eye in depth of shadow; but the eyes—deep violet eyes—were full and large, shining from under the calm brow with a pure living light.

The arch of the pencilled eyebrows—the delicate curves of the nostril and lip—the beautifully moulded cheek and chin—were all in perfect harmony—all betokened feeling, intellect, refinement. She was "fair, not pale," but her colour was soft and clear, rather than brilliant; there was nothing dazzling about her, but the gleam of her golden hair, the true rare golden, which shone in the sunlight as with a glory.

The form was worthy of the face, tall and
slight, but fully developed; the hands and arms especially beautiful.

Seldom indeed is seen such a being "made up of every creature's best."

It was just like Francis Livingstone to volunteer, as a matter of course, a journey of two hundred miles in order to escort "an unprotected female." He had made his mother write to say he would meet her at C——, where she must necessarily stop the first night. Grace felt the kindness—it was a pleasant foretaste of the welcome she was to meet;—and when at the station a tall gentleman-like stranger stepped up to the carriage-window, and begged to introduce himself as Colonel Livingstone, she knew instinctively that she had gained a friend for life.

I have said that Francis was Lady Livingstone's favourite son—judge whether she had not some reason for her preference. Though
he had not Katherine's versatility of talent, nor the accomplishments of John or George, his character was of the highest order.

Noble-hearted, unselfish, "tender and true," he always reminded me of the brave and gentle Bayard; and it seemed as if he belonged of right to a more chivalrous age than ours. His manners were marked with that respectful courtesy to women, which is not of the present day. I do not mean to exalt the past above the present, but in this respect I think it must be allowed that we have deteriorated. We have not time for the politeness of our ancestors. A gallant soldier—a faithful friend—gentle and generous—loyal and brave—Francis Livingstone was a man of whom wife and mother might well be proud, and proud of him they were. But he was too shy and undemonstrative to shine in society beside the brilliant Guardsman, who, though not so tall, or of so lofty a bearing,
had the charm of youth, and the ease of a man of the world. But I always thought Francis the handsomest of the Livingstones.

Kind reader, may I venture to hope you are favourably impressed?

Invercarron was one of those houses where people came on visits of months. A family friend, therefore, had many opportunities of taking notes; and as I had the good fortune to stand well in the favour both of her Ladyship and the younger branches, and have, moreover, a good deal of time at my own disposal, I enjoyed many advantages; for I was looked upon as a person who might be trusted, and they all reposed confidence in me, more or less—a confidence which, excepting to the public, I have never betrayed.

It was one of the choicest houses to visit. One felt so entirely at home, and there was so much kindness, and gaiety, and originality among them. They were so pleasant.
I think I see them now, as I have often seen them, seated round the tea-table, in the large bay-window of the drawing-room, which looked upon the river and the hill, and where we used to linger of a summer or autumn evening, watching the changing colours of Ben-Ard, as the sun went down behind its crest.

Invercarron had not all the beauty of Glenruth, but it had much of its own, and it was a most enjoyable place. The inmates, however, constituted its great charm.

To say that Grace did not immediately find herself at home amongst them would, perhaps, be to convey a wrong impression, for the frank kindness and affection which was shown her by one and all plainly showed that they received her as one of themselves. But it was a home so very different in all its circumstances from the one in which her childhood had been passed (Ashby could not be called a home), that it seemed to her like another existence—this complete change of scene
and habit of life was not however without its beneficial effect on her health, both of mind and body, which otherwise might, most probably would, have suffered from the effect of all she had gone through so recently. She was sensible of this, and thankful for it; and although there were times when the fountains of her heart were unsealed, and overflowed in sad, sweet memories, yet her general tone of mind was calm, and soon became even cheerful.

To Lady Livingstone she looked up with grateful affection, and towards Katherine she was attracted at once by that species of sympathy which we cannot account for, but which most people have experienced at one time or other. The odd force, perhaps, when better understood, may explain it, at present we are only in possession of the fact.

No two creatures, being both so gifted and so loveable, could be more unlike than
Grace and Katherine. No two friends could be more warmly and tenderly attached. Katherine had the advantage in talent, in cleverness, in knowledge of the world. Grace had more *genius*, more stability, more thoughtfulness. In art, Katherine might have done anything, and did nothing. With less manual aptitude, and perceptive faculties naturally less acute, Grace accomplished far more. Both loved books, but Grace's reading had been well ordered, and her taste sedulously cultivated. Katherine had been left entirely to herself; and along with much that was valuable, she had read a good deal, which it would have been well if she could have forgotten; but her powerful memory retained it all. Grace was never idle; she had learned the value of handwork as a sedative, when the heart is troubled. Katherine could scarcely ever be said to be employed; and restless as she was
by nature, would rather sit doing absolutely nothing than touch a needle. She could not endure the sight of those female implements. In her tastes and habits of thought, Katherine was very like a man; and yet she was not masculine in her manners or appearance—quite the reverse.

Magdalen watched the quick-growing intimacy between these two with much interest. She loved Katherine dearly—who could help loving Katherine?—and before long Grace was equally dear to her. She hoped the companionship of one so good, and gentle, and beautiful, would have a good effect on Katherine, who was strongly influenced by beauty.

"Well, Kathie," said Magdalen, one evening, about a week after Grace's arrival, "do you find the society of the crape and weepers so very insupportable?"

"I wish the crape and weepers could
be got rid of, because I hate them, as you know, Maudlin; but as they are inseparable from Grace at present, why they must just be put up with. I should wish to look at her continually; even if she were attired in sackcloth trimmed with ashes.”

“Slave of beauty!”

“Well, slave of beauty, if you will. I wonder who would not be the slave of such a beauty as that? Other people are as well as me. Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Livingstone for one. What do you say to that, Maudlin?”

“That he shows his taste, as you do, dear Kathie; I think she is most beautiful, and yet it did not strike me so immediately as one would think such perfect features would at first; I only saw the sweet, sweet expression.”

“Well, it was just the same with me, Magdalen,” said John; “I could not have
told you the first day what any of her features were like; and I don't know the colour of her eyes now."

"They are several colours," said Katherine; "they were exactly the colour of Ben-Ard last night, and this morning they were blue."

"Did you ever see such hair?" said John; "it must be about three yards long; and it is so uncommon to see black eyelashes with that sort of hair."

"And such a head and throat!" said Katherine.

"And such a figure, and such hands and arms!" said Francis.

"Ah! but you haven't seen her feet and ankles, which are just as good; a very rare thing, let me tell you; for you hardly ever see them go with good hands."

"Katherine, my dear, you think far too much of people's appearance," interposed
Lady Livingstone. "What does it signify whether your friends are handsome or not? After all, beauty is only skin deep."

"As long as it is skin deep, I don't ask for more," said Katherine; "and as to its not signifying, I beg to say it signifies a great deal to me. I much prefer handsome people to plain ones."

"Katherine, you really are quite ridiculous."

"Well, mamma, we all have our little preferences; your's is for excellent frights, as witness Mrs. Ramsay and Miss Dempster. I prefer beauty, with or without goodness. Don't you think it is a pity Jack is so good-looking, mamma?" continued Kathie; "and how much more comfort you would have in Francis if he were knock-kneed and squinted! My nose must be a strong consolation to you."

This sally produced a laugh, in which her Ladyship could not help joining. "Hold
your tongue, you impudent monkey," said she. "Go and make tea."

The truth was, Lady Livingsgtone took no small pride in her handsome sons; and her theoretical contempt for beauty did not go for much with Katherine, who, as we have seen, held very independent opinions, untrammelled by veneration for those of her parent.

"Who was the belle of the season, Jack?" said she, returning to the subject when they were all assembled at the tea-table. "Wasn't Lady Daventry?"

"She was one, and Lady Barbara Vane, was another, and half a dozen more. There are no two people think alike about beauty."

"Well, but there must be a standard, for instance, I suppose there are not two opinions about Lady W——d's beauty."

"There is a standard of form, of course; but there can be no rule for expression," said
Magdalen, "and that is what tells with most people—though I must own perfection of form has great charms for me."

"Perfect form, must result in beauty of expression," said Katherine.

"Perfect form—yes—but how very, very seldom we see that. And even then, unless the soul corresponds, you will not have perfect beauty."

"I'm not so sure of that, Magdalen," said John. "The soul may be a very ugly soul, and yet look very well through a handsome face."

"I can hardly believe that John."

"But I know it. I could give you an instance—the handsomest face I know, hides about the wickedest heart."

"Who's your friend, Jack—man or woman?"

"It's a man; but I am not going to give any names."
“It's not Captain Armytage—I know he is the beauty of the brigade.”

“Ned Armytage!—no, I should think not.”

“Oh! then I know—it's handsome Heneage. I have heard he is a beautiful demon.”

“To change the subject, what place of worship will Miss Livingstone choose to attend,” whispered John to his sister across the table; “have you ascertained what persuasion she is of?”

“Miss Livingstone, here is a virtuous young man expressing his solicitude to know your religious preferences. We have convenience for all creeds, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Relief, Secession, Burgher, Cameronian, and if you can wait a month or two, you will have the advantage of a Catholic chapel; where, as Mr. Thompson tells us, we shall witness all the pomp of Poppery.”

“Katherine be quiet,” said her mother,
"Grace will think you a perfect heathen to hear you speak that way. It is quite true, however, Grace, we have a great variety of denominations in this part of the country—but the gentry all attend the Episcopalian Chapel."

"Mamma, I wonder how you can insult Magdalen by such a speech, when you know that she persists in worshipping after her own uncomfortable fashion in the Kirk of her country. And I dare say Grace does the same. All Lowlanders are Whigs and Covenanters. Are you not a Presbyterian, now, Grace? Confess."

"I am not ashamed to confess it," said Grace, smiling; "but I will go to your chapel to-morrow, if you will let me."

"Magdalen, what do you say to such apostasy? Can you see this victim trembling on the brink of Prelacy, without putting forth a hand to arrest her downfall?"
"I do not think Grace is in such imminent danger from one sermon of Mr. Marshall's; but if you think so, I will ask her to walk with me to Ardoch to-morrow."

"What a shame to entice her, when she said, of her own free will, that she would go with us. Grace, don't be led by Maudlin—she is an intolerant bigot."

"I make a rule of going to all in turn," said John; "it's the only way to keep the mind free and unbiased. I mean to go with Magdalen to-morrow."

"I wish, John, you would just go to Balvanie," said Lady Livingstone. "People should keep to their own Church."

"But I have not made up my mind which Church to belong to, mother, and I must weigh all that is to be said on each side. I heard Mr. Marshall last Sunday—so I shall go and listen to Mr. Forbes to-morrow."

"I can't see the use of unsettling your
"I suppose then, Grace, you will flee as a partridge to the mountains with Magdalen," said Katherine, next morning at breakfast, "though you did promise to go with us. I observe good people think there is no harm in breaking their engagements for conscience sake."

"I should prefer going to the parish church," said Grace, smiling, "and I heard Lady Livingstone say she thought people ought to keep to their own."

"Oh, mamma only meant that to apply to Episcopalians, which she thinks ought to be everybody's church; not to poor benighted individuals like you and Magdalen, who belong to no church at all."

"Now, Katherine, don't put words into my
mouth that I never made use of; you must not believe half of what this monkey says, my dear; just go with Magdalen, and another time perhaps you will come with us to chapel, and judge for yourself."

"I wonder at you, mamma, proposing to unsettle Grace's mind in that way. I never heard anything so inconsistent."

"Go and put on your things, Katherine," said her mother, "the carriage will be at the door immediately."

So Grace went with Magdalen to the parish church of Ardoch, and as they were coming home their conversation turned on the difference between the Episcopalian and Presbyterian churches.

"I suppose you are a Presbyterian by education, like myself," said Magdalen, "but I hope from conviction also. I mean I hope you do not take it altogether upon trust."
In these days, as indeed always, I think one ought to be able to render a reason for one's faith."

"I have examined the subject, especially since I have lived in England, and I am satisfied that the Church of Scotland holds the most scriptural views of doctrine."

"So it seems to me," said Magdalen. "At the same time, we must remember how many good and wise men have adorned the Church of England: yes, and the Church of Rome too, grievously in error as we must believe her to be."

"You do not speak like a bigot, Mrs. Livingstone," said Grace, smiling.

"I hope I am not a bigot," said Magdalen, "and when you have been with us a little longer you will find we do not always mean all that we say. They know I am not a bigot, because they have often heard me say that, in some respects, I wish there
could be an assimilation between the two churches."

"Do you mean in regard of form?" asked Grace, "for I have often wished our ministers might use the beautiful prayers of the English service."

"They may, you know, only that very few of them do. I would not have extempore prayer done away with, because I think occasions constantly occur to which it may be more appropriate than any form of words can be; but I think they might be conjoined. Also, I like the regular reading of Scripture in the English Church, and, I must say, I like to see some respect paid to the House of Prayer. I think our forefathers erred greatly in trying to divorce the forms and symbols of worship and reverence from the spirit; but I think there is an improvement among us in this respect, though not to the extent that could be wished."
"I never could bring myself to rejoice, as I have heard many do," said Grace, "in the levelling measures of our great Reformer; but still I think a more effectual work was done in Scotland than in England."

"I think so, too," said Magdalen, "and that we see this more clearly now than ever. How difficult it is for the Church of England to guard against the interpretation of her articles by Romanising teachers. They were originally framed with a view to include many shades of opinion, and this, like most things, has had its evil as well as its good tendency. Her articles, in their plain sense, appear to me decidedly Protestant. Her Liturgy favours the Oxford views. The Nicene Creed and the baptismal service does so decidedly; and the meaning of the article on the Lord's Supper is, I think, very obscure. It is in the exposition of the Sacraments and the Catechism, that I think the doctrine of the
Presbyterian Church so much clearer and more scriptural, and that is what determined my choice; for at one time I had a great leaning to the Church of England, having been several years in her communion."

"But would you not attend an Episcopal Church now?" asked Grace.

"Certainly I would, in England," replied Magdalen; "and have even done so here, although I cannot agree with Mr. Marshall. The Scotch Episcopalians, you know, are much nearer Rome than England. Mr. Marshall would not admit you or me to communion, supposing we were willing to go."

"Indeed," said Grace, "I have heard of such things, but hardly believed it."

"It is even so. Scotch Episcopalianism is more exclusive than Roman Catholicism, for she admits all to Baptism or the Eucharist without question. Mr. Marshall himself is a very good man, humble-minded and sincere,
and his sermons are not likely to make many proselytes. You know that party holds preaching very cheap. But here we are at home. I should apologise for delivering such a discourse to you, dear. After all, it is not whether this or that Church be right that is the question; it is whether we, each one for himself, have entered in at the straight gate, and are keeping the narrow way."
CHAPTER XI.

"For several virtues 'she' has loved several 'men.'"—SHAKSPERE—A variorum.

"You have not taken me into any of the cottages yet, Kathie," said Grace one day, after she had been about a fortnight at Invercarron. "I should like to go with you, and make acquaintance with your people."

"I don't know any of them," was Katherine's reply; "I never go into any of their houses. It's not the custom here, and they don't like it."

"How strange!" said Grace. "How do you account for that?"
"They are a very bad lot in this part of the country—almost all Chartists. Did you observe the shape of the heads in church? You won't find an ounce of veneration or benevolence in the whole congregation. They are perfect animals. Now, here are two men coming along: I'll ask them a question, just to give you a specimen of their manners."

She did so, and the answer was boorish enough certainly. Grace had been struck with this before. At Glenruth, knowing all the cottagers, and beloved by all, they never passed her on the road without a respectful salutation, and often she stopped and spoke to them. Here such civilities appeared to be unknown.

"I am very sorry to hear this," she said, after a while; "it was one of my greatest pleasures at home to visit the poor bodies; it is such a constant source of interest."

"That is what I cannot comprehend," said
Katherine, "though Maudlin says so, and there is generally truth in what she says. What ideas or feelings can you have in common with that class, and consequently what sympathy? It gives me unmitigated disgust to go among them. I tried it for a while to please Magdalen, but now I have given it up."

"Does Magdalen visit them, then?"

"Oh yes, and she will be enchanted if you will offer to go with her. I wonder she has not proposed it to you before now?"

"Does she find them all so very uncouth?"

"She says not, but then you know Magdalen has a most extraordinary faculty of getting at everybody, and they would be superhuman if they could resist her. They all send for her when they are ill. If Magdalen had been a Catholic, she would have been a Sœur de la Charité."

"But do you not think," said Grace, "that
one ought to go among them, and attend to their wants, even though they are uncouth?"

"Certainly, one ought to attend to their wants; but so we do. I don't believe there are any people better cared for than the poor about here. Mamma is for ever sending Blaikie and Mrs. Duff to see that they want for nothing, and that is much better, I think, than going one's self. I am sure they like it better."

"Perhaps you know best, but I should be inclined to doubt that."

"Well, I see you will be joining yourself to Maudlin, and then I must either go on these pious pilgrimages too, or walk by myself. Now look at Ben-Ard from here; is not that better worth looking at than all the old women in six parishes?"

You could not have a more delightful companion than Katherine in a country walk, she had such a quick eye—the eye of an artist.
for the beautiful—she knew exactly where to place you so that the lines of the landscape should fall most harmoniously, and no effect of light or shadow, however evanescent, escaped her rapid perception. Then she had that susceptibility to association which is so characteristic of a vivid imagination. There was not a hundred yards of walk in any direction which did not recall some friend, some scene, some book she had read; and her companion had only to listen while she poured forth her recollections, seasoned with observations as original as they were often forcible and true.

Grace took extreme pleasure in these tête-à-tête rambles, and if she could not always agree with Katherine, their minds being of a totally different cast, she found therein much food for reflection, and much improvement.

Their rambles were not always tête-à-tête.
Sometimes Magdalen, sometimes Francis and John, sometimes all three joined them; and Kathie had besides a train of satellites among the neighbouring youth who were constantly revolving round their planet, and basking in her rays.

Kathie was an universal favourite, and had as many lovers as a London beauty. No one would have called her handsome, far less would you have said she was pretty, but there was a play of expression in her changeful face that oftentimes made her lovely. No feature would bear criticism except her eyes, those dear, kind, truthful blue eyes, which looked so honestly and so lovingly into yours. They had the shape and setting which gives that candid, fearless expression so engaging. There was also much character in her full mobile lips, and the contour of her face and chin; and her head, though not faultless in shape, was particularly well set on a beautiful throat.
and shoulders; she was tall and well-made, and had particularly small hands.

Yes, she had many lovers devoted and constant, and she had the art—or rather the faculty, for she used no arts—of making them friends as well as lovers, and of retaining them in both capacities for years. She was no flirt; I doubt if she ever was thoroughly in love, or could quite have made up her mind to marry any one of her adorers; or rather, whether she could have made up her mind to dismiss several by promoting one.

She loved power, it must be owned, but she had much benevolence for her slaves. They had almost all worn their chains from boyhood. Frederick Hamilton was the contemporary of her brother John, and Ludovick Fraser and Andrew Campbell were about her own age. These were the front rank men, but there was a troop behind too numerous to mention.
It never seemed to occur to Lady Livingstone that either Katherine or her knights had hearts to lose. I have not unfrequently observed this loss of apprehension on the part of mothers with regard to the children of their old age. They seem to forget that their Benjamins must some day attain unto ripe years as well as the Reubens and Simeons. It was Lady Livingstone's chief fault in the management of Katherine that she treated her too much as a child—a spoiled clever child. In many respects she was allowed a freedom of action which is seldom granted to unmarried women—in trifles she was checked and thwarted almost unreasonably.

It was exactly the reverse of Lady Glenruth's system with Grace, which, short as had been its time of trial, had yet resulted so admirably. As a young child, Grace learned the great lesson of unquestioning obedience;
but as soon as she could understand the reason why this or that thing should be done, or abstained from, a reason was given; and she was taught, not left, to think and judge for herself, and to consider the end. She had much liberty but no licence, and she was the companion rather than the play-thing of her parents. Lady Glenruth knew her child's character, and pointed out to her its strength and its weakness. Katherine was left to discover hers as she might, and the result of such discoveries as she made were not communicated to her mother. Katherine, naturally open as the day, was driven to evade rules to which she would not submit, and cared not to dispute, and which certainly were more adapted for the regulation of ten than twenty years.

A slight sketch of Kathie's knights—some of them at least—may not be out of place here.
Frederick Hamilton was the great friend of her brother John. He was not strikingly handsome, but he was singularly gentlemanlike and high-bred in manners and appearance. He was reserved and somewhat shy, excepting amongst those whom, like the Livingstones, he had known intimately and long. Of all Kathie's knights, he was the one whom Magdalen preferred—perhaps from a certain resemblance which his character bore to that of Francis, with whom he was a great favourite, but still more because she thought he was more likely to influence Katherine for good, than any of her other adorers. She believed him, moreover, to be the one whom Kathie herself preferred; but that dear creature's own ideas on the state of her affections were somewhat vague and confused. Frederick was not demonstrative of his passion, but Magdalen, who was very clear-sighted in these matters,
was convinced that he loved deeply, and had loved long.

Ludovick Fraser was a very handsome boy, a year or two younger than Katherine, and devoted to her with that blind worship which is characteristic of youthful passion. Whatever she did, whatever she said, was:

"Wisest, virtuosest, discreetest—best:"

as she was, in his enamoured eyes,

"Fairest 'mid a thousand fair."

I like to see an honest-hearted, ingenuous boy absorbed in an unreasoning love—a love so stout and healthy that it lives and thrives on the most meagre fare. It seemed quite sufficient for Ludovick's happiness to be in Katherine's presence. His handsome brown eyes used to fix themselves upon her, and follow her every motion; and to be her part-
ner for a waltz or polka was to him the acme of human felicity.

Andrew Campbell was a clever, accomplished, vain, witty, handsome, affectionate rattle. He was very much in love with Katherine; but he had loved others before—he might love others yet. I had more confidence in the tried constancy of Frederick, or the untried faith of Ludovick; yet Andrew Campbell’s loves were quite sincere while they lasted, and I doubt not he had within him the elements of a kind and affectionate husband. Absence seemed to be the test that tried his affection most severely. Propinquity kindled the spark of love, and parting blew it into a flame which in absence was extinguished, he always leaving his heart behind him; but he always recovered it, and as often as he returned to the neighbourhood it was again laid at Kathie’s
feet—not perhaps in so many words; but it was easy to see that she had only to pick it up. How Kathie managed to impose silence on her slaves, I don't know; but even Ludovick, whom she treated with as much unreserve as her own brothers, had never ventured to speak of love.

Then there was Captain Clavering, but he was a regular flirt, a handsome, agreeable, good-natured London man. He used to captivate Kathie's fancy each time he came down to Invercarron, and I am by no means sure that she did not captivate more than his fancy in the long run; but nobody gave him credit for the capability of being in love, and if he was he never said so. Besides, his was a divided allegiance, for in London he wore the chains of the belle of the season; but he never left his heart behind him. It always accompanied him wherever he went, and was ready for immediate use.
And as for Kathie, she liked them all so much, that I am sure it would have gone to her heart to make any invidious distinctions; so she rode and walked with them all, talked to Frederick of books and arts, to Andrew of men and manners, to Ludovick of deer-stalking and deep-sea fishing, and to Captain Clavering of London life. She had the admirable art of suit ing her conversation to her company; and they all thought her charming—as well they might.
CHAPTER XII.

"But what awak'st thou in the heart, O Spring,
The human heart, with all its joys and sighs," &c.

Magdalen repeated these lines to Grace as they walked together up the Ard one lovely day in early spring, one of those soft, still days with which March sometimes makes amends for the roughness of his wont, and which often come between a hurricane and a snow-storm.

"Why is it," said she, "that a beautiful day at this season impresses one so much more
with sadness than mirth? In summer one can be glad in the sunshine, in winter the bright keen air cheers and invigorates, and a fine harvest is the most joyous season of all; but one's enjoyment of early spring is always deeply tinged with melancholy.

"I cannot think this peculiar to myself," continued Magdalen, "or else I might account for it, but it appears to be a very general feeling, and Mrs. Hemans suggests a beautiful solution."

"I feel the same," said Grace, "especially to-day; but then—" her eyes filled with tears.

Magdalen had observed Grace's spirits to be unusually depressed lately; she thought by leading her to speak of her sorrows, her heart might be relieved.

"It is very natural that you should feel sad at each returning season, dear Grace, the past year or two have been so full of
trial for you; then I think spring always carries one back to one's own spring—to childhood—often, though not always, the happiest time of one's life."

"Was it not so with you?" asked Grace.

"I had much happiness as a child, but also much sorrow. I had seen death before I was six years old, and all I loved and lost died in spring. People are apt to say children do not feel these things, because they cannot understand them; but I am sure, from my own experience, that they often do feel deeply, and long remember the loss of those they love, especially brothers and sisters. I have always felt so thankful for the exemption my children have hitherto enjoyed from such a sorrow."

"My childhood was very happy," said Grace. "I did not know what grief was until my dear mother died, and then childhood seemed to cease at once and for ever."
"How old were you, Grace?"

"Between twelve and thirteen."

"Your mother died very suddenly."

"In a moment; it was a disease of the heart, which no one had ever suspected unless she had done so herself, which I often think may have been the case, when I remember things she used to say to me."

"It must have been a fearful blow to you."

"Yes, indeed; but for her I have often thought it was the happiest death that could have been vouchsafed. She was never unprepared, and she was spared all the grief of parting and the anxiety which even she might have felt, at leaving my dear father with no other companion than his children—she was spared all that."

"Yes, for such an one a sudden death must surely be the happiest; but few minds can contemplate the possibility of such a thing without awe, that petition of the Litany
is the natural prayer of the human heart. Most of us have need to be quiet for a little while before we fall asleep.”

“Have you lost many brothers and sisters?” asked Grace.

“Several, before I can remember; the two brothers, whose deaths I spoke of just now, were my own companions and playfellows. My sisters died before I can remember.”

“I never knew what it was to have a sister,” said Grace. “Since I have known dear Kathie, I can imagine what a dear relationship it must be.”

“It makes me very happy to see you and Kathie so much attached—not that I doubted how it would be, for she is the most loveable of beings—but you are very different. I wish you could give Kathie a little of your steadiness and sobriety, Grace.”

“Very quick, clever people are seldom what you call steady, I suppose. Kathie is always
on the *qui vive*, always observing, always full of something."

"But not always doing something—not always interested in that which is best worth her interest."

"We had a conversation the other day on the subject of visiting the poor. I cannot help thinking she is mistaken in her opinions about that. Do you find them so very impracticable as she says they are?"

"By no means: they are not a particularly gracious-mannered set, but I have always found them kindly and frank on acquaintance. When you first go among them, of course they are shy and awkward; and Kathie sets this down for dislike of your intrusion, which I believe to be quite a mistake."

"And can you not persuade her to try the experiment?"

"She has done so several times to oblige me; but I have ceased to recommend it."
Unless that sort of thing is done from inclination, or one's own conviction of its being right, it had better not be done."

"That argument might lead one a long way, don't you think?"

"I believe it to be sound, nevertheless. People are very apt to declaim on what should and should not be done: as for instance, that it is right to visit the poor, wrong to go to balls and theatres, and the like: I think this is beginning at the wrong end."

"Do you think it a matter indifferent, then, which one does, if from a right motive?"

"As regards one's self, doubtless, the motive is what we must be sure of. We have no right to judge the motives of others, and some may innocently do that which would be wrong in another."

"So many good people, to judge from
their writings, think it positively wrong to indulge in worldly amusements at all—wrong for any one."

"Therein I think they are apt to go too far, and to forget the distinction between use and abuse. Dangerous to many dispositions such amusements may be—most pernicious when they become a habit or necessity; but there is a danger in bringing up young people to think such things wicked; and thus leading them to judge all those who join in them, not to mention that this system often fails of its end. Not unfrequently you see the children of very strict parents rush far more violently into dissipation when they escape from control, than those who have been allowed to mix in the world freely."

"But then if a parent thinks such things wrong, or even dangerous, surely it must be their duty to guard their children from the sin or danger, as long as they have control over them."
"Unquestionably; but I was considering what was the best means of doing so."

"And what do you consider the best means?"

"Make religion a lovely and a pleasant thing to children; associate it with all innocent enjoyments, but do not let pleasure be their chief good. Point out to them the danger which does exist in amusements as we have been considering; and try to make them place their happiness on higher objects. I think a mind thus trained is not likely to be led away by the love of amusement—far less likely than those who are taught to consider such things sinful in the abstract."

"Then you do not think balls, for instance, sinful in the abstract?"

"No, I cannot. To some they are quite harmless; to others, full of dangerous excitement—so much depends on the circumstances. A course of balls must be bad for any one, and I cannot imagine any thoughtful
person engaging in such a course. Those who can find pleasure in so doing, would not be better employed in solitude. We just come back to where we began. You must first endeavour to give the spirit a higher aim, and then it will not be content with the best that this world can offer; but we can only endeavour, God alone can give. I should not be afraid of letting you go to balls, Grace. I do not think they would have any dangerous charm for you.”

“['I do not know. I have never thought much about them; but I am sure that other things may be as dangerous to me as balls can be to any one.”

“If you feel that, and know where the danger lies, it will not have power to harm you—forewarned is forearmed.”
CHAPTER XIII.

"Men
Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief
Which they themselves not feel;
A wretched soul, bruised with adversity,
We bid be quiet when we hear it cry;
But were we burdened with a weight of pain
As much, or more, we should ourselves complain."

"Oh, if you are going with Magdalen I
shall eschew your society," said Kathie, after
breakfast one morning, hearing Grace pro-
pose to accompany Mrs. Livingstone on an
early walk. "I know by the serious expres-
sion of her bonnet, that she is going to read
to old women, and catechise young children.
Poor little wretches! how they must tremble
at the approach of that grey gown. Now,
Maudlin, do you flatter yourself they like as
well to see you as Blaikie, whom they can talk with at their ease?"

"Good-bye, Kathie, I have no time to argue the point this morning," was Magdalen's reply, as she left the room. "One thing;" continued she to Grace, "Kathie forgets—and there are others besides her that lose sight of it—that there are other duties to our neighbours among the poor besides almsgiving, which is indeed, I think, a duty to be exercised with much caution and discretion; yet how often is it the only one to which we give heed, keeping all the kindly sympathies of life for the class to which we belong. I think, too, we lose so many lessons by keeping aloof from them. Faults they have, doubtless—faults peculiar to their condition, and which are especially offensive to us—want of refinement, want of tact, low ideas of enjoyment; but avoiding them is not the way to counteract these, and I have often been struck with instances of true refinement and delicacy of feeling one meets with where one would least expect it, and where certainly it must be a plant of
native growth, flourishing in a most ungenial clime. On the other hand, how many examples do we find of patience and contentment under what seems to us a very hard lot."

"Yes," said Grace, "and of charity, I think the charity of the poor to the poor is a very beautiful thing. I have known a man walk ten miles after his day's labour to fetch the doctor for a neighbour's child, and a woman who had to toil among her own all day, sit up at night to nurse it."

"The ungrudging spirit in which they rejoice at the prosperity of those above them, and the kindly interest they take in our welfare, is, I think, another of the virtues of the poor; not that I am one of those who fancy there are virtues peculiar to a mud floor, as a certain writer says there are those which are born only on the steps of a throne. We shall find in all ranks of human nature
the same evil tendencies, in most the same possibilities of good; but circumstances seem fearfully against some."

"Yes," said Grace, "I am sure their advantages are few and their temptations many, as compared with ours."

"To some forms of vice undoubtedly their temptations are far greater than ours, as drunkenness, for instance, the parent of so many other crimes."

"It is very terrible to think how that vice seems to increase instead of diminish, in spite of temperance societies and all that has been preached and spoken against it," said Grace.

"Preaching and speaking, and even temperance societies, will do little good I fear," said Magdalen, "till we make their homes more attractive than the public-house—of course their sin increases their misery, perpetuates the wretchedness they fly from; but
only look at their dwellings, how can there be any comfort, any decency, any refinement, where human beings are crowded together as we see them, even in country cottages, which are as palaces to the dwellings of the poor in large towns?"

"The condition of the poor in large towns is a fearful subject to contemplate," said Grace: "but happily it has come to be considered, and one may hope that in time some remedy may be found. I observe it occupies the attention of so many people now—as well it may."

"It is a terrible subject, and one which almost tempts one to despair. Even Government, it would seem, can do so little; but there is work for all of us, public and private; and in the country much might be done, I think, by proprietors if they would only set to work. How often I have grieved over the great houses built, generally far too
large for the owner's fortune, standing empty perhaps, while the cottages around were crowded to suffocation—a disgrace to the property. I have sometimes wished to put the great empty rooms to some account, at least, by furnishing and filling them out of the hovels. This is especially the case in Scotland."

"Yes," said Grace, "in England, as far as I have seen, they certainly have a better idea of comfort and cleanliness, and a much greater sense of beauty."

"In some parts of England," said Magdalen, "the cottages are models of comfort, in others, again, very sordid; but in Scotland comfort is the exception, and, as you say, we are very deficient in a sense of beauty. One sees cottages perfectly clean and tidy inside, with a midden at the door, and hardly ever an attempt at a garden, which in the part of England I am best acquainted with, is universal."
"Is that in Sussex?"

"Yes; but then to be sure Lady Carysford is a person who takes great pains and interest in her neighbours, and goes among them continually."

Thus discoursing they reached their destination, and entering the first of a group of scattered cottages, they found an ancient woman, bed-ridden and blind, whose wrinkled face yet wore an expression of cheerful serenity, which you might have looked for in vain on many a younger and smoother brow. It lighted up at the sound of Magdalen’s voice as she inquired kindly how her old friend felt.

"Oh, Mistress Livingstone, but I hae been thinking lang for ye."

"Why, Eppy, I was here on Monday—have you been ill?"

"It's no for mysel—I canna compleen me that has sufferable ease—but oh! mem, there's sore trouble at Peter Diack's doon-
bye. Jamie Diack—that's Peter's auld son—that wrought at the Black Craig quarries, was brought hame a corp yestreen, and his wife at the doon-lying; and they say she's clean dimentit—puir thing!"

"Jamie Diack!" exclaimed Magdalen, "the young man who was married last year."

"Ay; it ill be a twalmonth come hairst, he was marrit on upon a dochter o' John Finlater's, and they cam' at Martinmas to leeve wi' the auld fowk; for Peter, ye see, he's no fit to work, and Betty, she's but a frail body, and puir David, the cratur, canna do a turn, sae Jamie he keepit them a', and a guid lad he was, puir fallow. And I was just wussin for ye, mem, for I thocht ye could, may be, speak a word o' comfort to that puir distractit lassie; trouble's sore to bide that comes sae sune—wae's me!"

"I will go at once, Eppy; but it is little comfort any one can give in such a case."
"Ye dinna ken how muckle, mem; no at the first stound, may be; but the kind word in season is pleasant to the sore heart; and ony way ye'll see if the puir lassie has a' thing needfu' for the wee bairn that's comin' into a weary warld."

Magdalen rose to go; Grace followed her to the door.

"Can I be of any use?" said she; "if not, I should only be in the way."

"Perhaps, dear, you will stay here and read a chapter to old Eppy, that would be a great kindness to her, and I will send you word if I want anything from the house."

Grace returned to Eppy's bedside, and Magdalen pursued her way to Peter Diack's, which was a few hundred yards from Eppy Lorimer's. What a scene opened to her!

On one bed lay the crushed and lifeless form of the young man, who had been killed by the falling in of a part of the quarry.
where he was working. There had not been time to dress the corpse, as the care of all was needed for the living, the poor young widow, who, in sore agony, was passing through her hour of peril, in what could scarcely be called a separate room, for only a wooden partition divided her bed from that on which the body of her husband was laid. The old father sat by the fireless hearth, tears coursing each other down his furrowed cheeks, and beside him was his wife, a bent and feeble woman, rocking herself to and fro, and moaning, "My bairn! my bairn!"

But perhaps the most painfully touching sight of all was to see poor David, who was what is called in Scotland a natural—but a little removed from idiotcy:—he kept wandering between the fire-place and bed, now lifting the sheet which had been thrown over the face of the dead, then dropping it hastily, shuddering at the sight of the blood which
disfigured it—then he would stoop over his father and try to wipe away his tears—ever and anon returning to gaze at the object which at once fascinated and terrified him.

Poor Davie! his affection for his brother had been remarkable, and perhaps if one could have penetrated into the prison-house of that darkened mind, one might have seen that his was not the least sorrowful heart in that poor family. To add to the tragic effect of the scene, the old collie had slunk under the bed, and resisting alike threats and enticements, lay there howling in sorrow almost human-like.

Magdalen made her way to the poor girl's bed-side—she was but a girl, as Eppy had said—not more than nineteen. Half a dozen women were gathered round her bewailing and lamenting, but scarcely one of them seemed to have much idea of being really useful.
"Has the doctor been sent for?" asked she, turning to the quietest of the group.

"Tam Brodie rade for Dr. Macintosh twa hours syne, and my gudeman's ower the hill for auld Kirstin Bain."

"Have you got everything ready that may be wanted?"

"Deed, mem, I'll no say that. I sought out a wheen bit duds o' my ain bairns, but the puir lassie has got naething forrit. She was na expeckin' her down-lyin' this month or mair."

"Then will one of you go a message for me to the house. Ask for my maid, and tell her to give you the bundle that came home from Tibbie Moir last week."

"Surely, mem," said several.

"And, Mrs. Innes, could not some of your laddies wile poor David out?"

"Oh, mem, the puir natural winna steer frae the house, but just gang back and forrit
till the corp; and he was mintin' e'enow to gar Jamie rise till his meat. See till him, mem! Oh, but it's a pity o'them this day!"

Magdalen looked round and saw poor David with a bowl of porridge—the supper that had been made ready for him who was brought home dead—timidly touching his poor brother's arm, then shrinking back as he felt the death cold hand. Presently they saw him spreading a plaid over the corpse, muttering to himself, "Jamie's cauld! Jamie's cauld!"

"Oh, Jamie! Jamie!" burst from the lips of the poor young widow.

Magdalen knelt down beside her, and took hold of her hands. She could say nothing, for her own heart was too full; but the gentle touch and compassionate face seemed to soothe the poor girl for a moment. Soon, however, burst forth again that sorrowful heart-broken cry: "Oh, Jamie! Jamie!"
The doctor arrived, and Magdalen remained until the little babe was born, and saw the cottage made as comfortable as the nature of the circumstances would permit; but it was a painful spectacle to see one neighbour dressing the new born infant, while others were arraying its father in his grave clothes.

The dog was forcibly removed by Tam Brodie, and tied up in his byre, and Magdalen succeeded in luring poor David away. She gave him some money to go and buy tea for his mother, which had always been the use to which the affectionate creature put any alms that might be offered to him; and she begged the neighbour who accompanied him to the shop, to keep him from home, if possible, for a night or two.

When Magdalen called at Eppy Lorimer's, she found Grace had gone home—leaving a message to say she had thought it best to do
so, in case Lady Livingstone should be made uneasy by their prolonged absence.

"And how's the puir lassie, mem. Is she onything mair settled like? Peggy Simson ca'd, and telt me the bairn is born. Will it live, think ye?"

"It seems healthy enough, Eppy; and poor Phemie was a little quieter when I left. Miss Livingstone is gone home, you say?"

"Yes, mem; is that the young leddy—her that they ca' Miss Katerine?"

"No, Eppy; she is another Miss Livingstone—a cousin. She is from the south country, like us."

"Lovey me! wull she be frae Cardenholm? weel I ken't some of thae Livingstones—clever men they were."

"This is Miss Livingstone of Glenruth."

"I hae heard till o' Glenruth, but I never saw it; but I ken't the bonny braes o' Cardenholm weel, when I was a slip o' a lassie—"
but that's no yestreen. I'm thinking she maun be a bonnie crater. Her voice is like the wimplin' o' a burn, but there's sorrow in the sound o't."

"She has come through a great deal of sorrow."

"The Lord send she come na through mair, the bonnie lamb."

They returned the next day to Broomy-knoe. Some sort of order and decency had been restored, but the old people did not appear to have stirred from their places since yesterday; and Davie was sitting by his brother's body, over which he had spread a new blanket, every now and then feeling the hand, then shrinking back as before. Grief and pain had nearly exhausted the poor young mother; she was lying still, and when urged to take anything:

"Oh! let me dee, let me dee!" was her
pitiful cry. "What for sud I lieve, and Jamie gane!"

"You must not say that; it is very wicked," said a grave, dry voice by the bedside, which Magdalen recognised as that of Miss Mitchell, the sister of a neighbouring laird—a good, well-meaning, but injudicious person—who could pity, but could not sympathise.

"You must not say that; you are tempting the Lord to punish you more severely."

"Ochone! ochone! and what mair can He do that has ta’en Jamie from me."

An exclamation of horror escaped Miss Mitchell’s lips.

"You ought to rejoice, poor, blinded creature, that your husband is taken from a world of sin and sorrow, at least, if he was prepared to go; if not, it is awful indeed; but you cannot help him by these rebellious cries and lamentations. You know quite well that we deserve all the correction God sends us."
Miss Mitchell's life had been singularly exempt from trial; that might be partly the reason why she was such a sorry comforter.

"Waes me!" said Mrs. Innes; "waes me, mem! when the waal is full, it maun rin ower. Mistress Livingstone, mem," whispered she to Magdalen, "will you speak to the puir lassie."

Miss Mitchell rose as Magdalen approached the bed.

"Perhaps, Mrs. Livingstone," said she, "you will be better able to bring this poor creature to a better state of mind, and persuade her to listen to reason. I have been here for more than an hour, and fear I must go now; but I did not like to leave her among her poor, ignorant neighbours, who only encourage her to give way. It is dreadful to see any one rebel against God's judgment in this way, and shows how much it was needed."

Magdalen was not sorry that Miss Mit-
chell's business called her elsewhere; had she remained, I fear she would have classed Magdalen among the "ignorant neighbours," for certainly she made no attempt to get poor Phemie to listen to reason; she merely took hold of her hands as before, stroked them gently, now and then repeating a verse of a psalm, or uttering a word of compassion.

By degrees the anguished spirit grew more calm, and Magdalen at last had the comfort of seeing her after a passionate flood of tears fall asleep, with her baby in her bosom. She had hitherto turned away her head when her child was brought to her; but Magdalen said: "Phemie, will you not be good to Jamie's bairn?"

Grace stood by, a pitying spectator. How vividly, in after years, her memory recalled that scene.

As they passed the bed of death, poor Davie touched Magdalen's gown, and called
her attention to a new blanket which was spread over the corpse.

"Jamie 'll get warm e'enow a wyte," said he, half inquiringly, as if his hopes were beginning to fail, and needed strengthening.

"To think o' the puir natural," said Mrs. Innes, who followed them to the door, "naething wad serve him, Tam telt me, but he beed to buy a blanket wi' the siller ye gied him, mem; and when the merchant heard o' the trouble that's here, he let him hae it; and when he gat it, he came hame het fit, and laid it on upon Jamie, and he's sat there and never steered sin syne."

O, Grace, is not that a sad commentary on our conversation of yesterday. What an accumulation of misery in that one room—death and sorrow, and anguish. It is too dreadful."
"It was, indeed, a sight to make one's heart ache," said Grace; but we saw a good deal of the kindliness we were speaking of."

"Yes, I think that never fails, when called for. I am afraid we shall see nothing here to impress you favourably," continued she, as they stopped at the door of another cottage; but I must go in to ask after a poor, little sick boy.

"How is Alick, to-day, Mrs. Simson?"

"Ou! mem, he's ay compleenin' on; he'll never be nae better, a wyte."

"I thought he was better the last time I saw him. Has he been taking the medicine?"

"He took it close, mem, till it was a' dune, and I had na the siller to get mair."

"But you know I told you to go to Dr. Macintosh, and ask for more when it was done."

"I did na like, mem, to pit you till the
expense, and it's no use, a wyte. He's a peer crater, mem; an' it wad please the Lord to tak him to His sel', it wad be a blessing."

"Mrs. Simson, you ought not to say that; it is not for us to judge what would be blessings."

"It's true, mem; but he's a sair burthen on puir folk that has to win their bread, and he's sae cankered whiles, I kenna whilk would to turn."

Magdalen stopped her by going to the poor boy, who was afflicted with hip complaint, and was altogether very unhealthy. The large tears were stealing down his cheeks, but there was an expression of resentment mingled with the sorrow of his face."

"Do you think the medicine did you good, Alick; would you like to take some more?"

"I hae taken nane o't, mem."

"Not taken it—and why?"
"Wee Geordie brak the bottle, and mither said she could na seek mair."

"Mrs. Simson, you told me he had taken it constantly."

"I'm sure I thought sae, mem. Alick, ye're telling a lee."

"It's no me that's tellin' a lee."

"And I wad hae sought some mair from the doctor yestreen, when I was at the toun, but he was aff to Peter Diack, a' folk's there a wyte. Ye'll hae been there yersel', mem?"

"Yes. I think you should not murmur at your trial, Mrs. Simson, when you consider theirs."

"Ay, it's a pity o' them; but they'll find plenty o' help. There was meat and claes frae Invercarron, and siller frae Miss Mitchell; and Davie, the natural, gaed by wi' a braw new blanket. It's lang or sic things 'ill come ither fowks' gate."
"I know of none in such sore need of help at present, Mrs. Simson."

"They're in trouble, nae doot; but a drucken guid man's waur nor a dead ane a wyte."

Magdalen took no direct notice of this remark, but said:

"I think, Mrs. Simson, you might make your house look more comfortable. It's a better one than Peter Diack's, or Eppy Lorimer's."

"Eppy Lorimer has na a sma' family to keep rampagin' but and ben. I hae envyed her mony's the time."

"But you might make your children help you, instead of letting them rampage. Here's Peggy, quite old enough to clean the house."

"Weel, sae I tell her whiles, but she disna mind."

"And why does not Janet go out to service? I am sure she might have got a place at Martinmas."
"'Deed, mem, I tried a' the kintra side, and could na get her hired."

"Why, Mrs. Grant, the gardener's wife at Invercarron, told me she was willing to hire her, but you would not consent."

"I could na think to let my bairn gang to sic a tairmigan o' a woman as yon; she wad hae wrought the heart out o' her."

"If that was your only reason, I think it was a bad one. Mrs. Grant is strict, but not severe; and she would have taught Janet the value of order and tidiness, which she is not likely to learn at home."

"Oh, mem, but if ye ken't what it is to be without a bawbee in the house frae week's end to week's end, as I hae been and am e'enow, ye wadna expeck a body to be ay redd up, like them that has their year's wage, and house and yard, and coal and candle for naething."

"Do you mean that you have no money in the house just now, Mrs. Simson?"
"Not a bawbee, mem, as I'm a leaving woman."

"Then what have you done with the five shillings Miss Mitchell gave you yesterday? has some of it gone for this?" said she, taking up a suspicious looking black bottle which stood on the dresser. "Mrs. Simson, your husband is not likely to give up the whisky while you supply him with it at home."

Mrs. Simson had not a word to say in reply, but just as Magdalen was going to leave the house, she rushed past her, to intercept some one who was coming in. It was her eldest daughter—a girl of seventeen—carrying an infant.

"Why, Mrs. Simson!" exclaimed Magdalen, then, as she saw the girl's shame-burnt face; "So this is the reason Janet could not go to service. Oh, for shame! for shame! to add sin to sin by such falsehoods."
"A wyte I was na gaun to tell o' the puir lassie's misfortin, and her my ain bairn," was the somewhat sullen reply. "There's waur nor her that gets nae blame. Ye'll no be for giein' me the siller for Alick's draps, mem," continued she, her voice changed to a whine.

"I will send the medicine, Mrs. Simson," said Magdalen, and left the house.

"That is a very unsatisfactory family," said she, as they walked homewards. "I never can trust a word that woman says. Duplicity is not unfrequent in her class, and disheartens one more than anything else; but I never have found one who told such barefaced and systematic falsehoods as Mrs. Simson, or whom it was so impossible to touch in any way. I had some hopes of the eldest girl, who is one of those common characters which take their tone from those
around. Had she been in good Mrs. Grant's service, she might have been saved. Oh, dear! oh, dear! how sad it is! Sin and sorrow on every side! I have given you a melancholy introduction to our poor neighbours, Grace."

"Old Eppy is an exception," said Grace. "What a very beautiful countenance that old woman has; and I was struck with the cheerful tone in which she spoke of herself, and the intense pity which she appeared to feel for her neighbours."

"Yes; Eppy is a remarkable character. She has gone through almost every species of trial and suffering, yet her cheerfulness never fails—her trust in God never falters; and she has, what is much more uncommon in her class than kindliness and sympathy—she has judgment and discretion. Before she was bed-ridden, she was the nurse and consoler of the whole country side."
“She is not a ——shire woman, surely? Her dialect is quite different.”

“No; she is a Lowlander; our first acquaintanceship grew out of that. I found she knew my *forbears*, and could tell me long histories of the ‘Auld Douglases.’ She knows Cardenholm, too; but I think you never were there, Grace?”

“No,” said Grace. “I had been very little away from Glenruth until I went to Ashby. But you must know Cardenholm—it is a fine place, is it not?”

“Yes; it has fine timber and a beautiful glen; but it is a long time since I was there.”

“Did you know the family?”

“I used to know them well—the elder ones that is—Basil and his sister. He and I used to be playfellows. She is a good deal younger. Poor Basil! he is a very amiable creature, and has a great deal of character,
though his appearance is so little in his favour."

"Do you know," said Grace, "I liked his appearance better than his father's, though he is what would be called a handsome man. There was something so courteous about Mr. Livingstone—so unmistakably gentlemanlike—I did not think of it at the time, but have often recalled since the impression he left with me, though our intercourse was so very brief."

"He is a thorough gentleman," said Magdalen, "and his courtesy is of the highest order, springing from the heart—in honour preferring others. Basil Livingstone is a true Christian, and has more real humility than almost any one I ever knew."
CHAPTER XIV.

Two years later, I again found myself at Invercarron (I generally paid an annual visit), and this time the house was full of company. Lord and Lady Daventry, Captain Clavering, Miss Ferrars, and divers others who came and went. George Livingston also, was at home, as well as those already known to you, the elements of a very agreeable party; yet, somehow things appeared to be out of joint, and it was sometime before I discovered what was wrong. The result, however, of much ob-
servation from the chimney-corner was this: No, dearest reader, on second thoughts, I will not tell you in so many words, that were an insult to your understanding, as if you could not form your own conclusions upon what I heard and saw; so let that suffice.

John Livingstone was pale and wan, and ill at ease—of course he was over head and ears in love with Grace—they had been snowed up together at Invercarron all the winter, and how could he escape; and she, there was at times a troubled expression in her usually calm eye, that I had not observed formerly, though it often was sad and tearful. Doubtless, I said to myself, these two are in love. I saw how it would be; but how are they to marry, poor dears, it is out of the question, and I shook my head despondingly. Katherine was, apparently, in very high spirits; but it was not
all gold that glittered there, I could see that. Magdalen’s pale face looked graver than usual; but then she had a voyage to India in prospect, that involved parting with her children. This explained also, the deeper shadow on Lady Livingstone’s face, for to lose sight of Francis was nearly as severe a trial as she could know. At her age such separations are hard to bear; it is only youth who can think of meeting again. Poor Francis, too, felt probably that he might not return, or returning, might miss her from her accustomed place. I thought I could read some such thoughts as these, as I watched his look of earnest affection fixed on her face. But this did not account for the depth of George Livingstone’s despondency, still less for the uncomfortable restlessness of Lady Daventry, kind-hearted, sympathising little soul, as I knew her to be. Meanwhile we all tried
very hard to persuade ourselves that we were enjoying extremely this lovely autumn. It was glorious weather, and Invercarron in its greatest beauty, as Northern Scottish scenery is in August and September. We shot, and fished, and rode, and walked, and had pic-nics on the tops of all the hills, and in the bottom of all the glens within a dozen miles round. I never saw so much gaiety, or so little cheerfulness at Invercarron.

Could Miss Ferrars be aware that Lady Livingstone and I were sitting in the little drawing-room, with the doors open, and consequently within ear-shot, when she held this apparently confidential conversation with Lady Daventry? She must have forgotten that she had seen us there half-an-hour before, and that we had no means of egress, except through the drawing-room.
“Do you not think Miss Livingstone very beautiful, dear Lady Daventry?—the cousin, I mean—some people say, she has only one expression, but really, I think she is quite lovely; I should like so much to know her.”

Lady Daventry opened her large, blue eyes a little wider, wondering perhaps, as I did also, what further opportunities of knowing a person Miss Ferrars could desire, after living five weeks under the same roof, and thus made reply,

“Oh, I think her the most beautiful creature I ever beheld; I long so to get her up to London—how she will turn the men’s heads; but I thought you must know her very well by this time. I am sure I feel as if I did, who have only been here ten days.”

“Ah! but then you know there is a great difference between us, dearest Lady Daventry; and then I think she is rather an
uncertain, perhaps, I should say, a reserved person. Sometimes I have thought she was very fond of me, and then I seem to have said or done something displeasing to her. But of course, she is in an embarrassing position here."

Again Lady Daventry's eyes opened wider.

"I don't think," said she, "that I quite understand what you mean. Miss Livingstone appears to me so completely l'enfant de maison here, they are all so fond of her, and I don't wonder at it, and then they are such dear kind people. How I do delight in Katherine."

"Oh, Katherine is what I call charming. I dote upon her!" exclaimed Miss Ferrars, ecstatically; "plain as she is, do you know I sometimes admire her face more than Miss Livingstone's."

"Plain! can you call Katherine plain, with such eyes, and such a mouth and chin, and
that ever-varying expression? I love Katherine’s face. But do tell me what you mean by Grace Livingstone’s embarrassing position—surely, they are all very fond of her?”

“Exactly, dear Lady Daventry, it is just that they are so fond of her. It is easy to see that both Captain Livingstone and his brother are desperately in love with her; and my opinion is, that she does not know which of them to choose, or whether it will not be better to wait till she goes to London, and fly at higher game. But you know, ‘a bird in the hand,’ and here she has two birds ready limed. I rather suspect she likes the gay guardsman best; but then, you know, of the two, Mr. Livingstone, is the better parti; and what will poor Lady Livingstone say, when she finds it all out, for she can’t endure her sons to be made unhappy, and either way, one or both of them must be miserable; besides that, it would be a wretched marriage
for either of them. Miss Livingstone has nothing but her beauty, and that won't clothe and feed a family, even if she an settle it upon her children."

Lady Daventry's eyes did not open at the end of this speech. She appeared to be looking for something on the carpet—her worsted needle, probably.

"But are you sure—I mean, have you seen anything—that is to say, do you think it is quite certain? because, you know, one fancies these sort of things sometimes; but, certainly, it is probable enough. Does Mrs. Livingstone think there is anything in it?"

"Oh, Mrs. Livingstone is a great deal too cautious to say what she thinks on such a delicate subject. She would not like to mix herself up in the matter; but I can see her watching them. It would be very difficult to blind her. Now, I am so unsuspicious, that unless a thing is unmistakeable, I never
find it out, but Katherine as much as told me, that both her brothers' hearts were gone—only, by the bye, she begged me to say nothing about it; but I am sure it is safe with you, dearest Lady Daventry, you won't make any allusion to it. We must see the result soon. You leave this on Thursday, don't you? I am so sorry, but I shall soon be going myself. I hope you will let me come and see you in town. I shall be there next spring with my cousin, Julia Stanhope. You know her, don't you? Is she not a darling?"

Grace and Katherine had entered the room as Miss Ferrers had prophesied the speedy elucidation of the mystery she had disclosed. Her concluding sentences, as may be observed, gave no clue to what had gone before, and enabled her in an unconstrained voice (at which I really marvelled...
and admired) thus to address the fair subject of discussion.

"Dearest Miss Livingstone, I hope you are going with us to the ball to-night? Katherine dear, have your persuasions been successful?"

"Oh, yes!" was the ready reply; "she is going. I've settled it all. Now, Grace, you needn't say any more about it, you promised you would go with me to one ball, and I won't be thrown over; besides, it's very bad for her to sit moping here with the elderly parties, instead of associating with her species—isn't it, Lady Daventry?"

Lady Daventry, thus appealed to, looked up at Grace with a peculiar inquiring distrustful expression, but it passed away almost immediately; it could not live under the pure light of that calm, truthful eye; and with the eager kindness natural to her, she seconded Katherine's wishes, or rather commands.
Grace evidently would rather have stayed at home. It was not in her nature soon to forget a great sorrow; and although at Invercarron, soothed by the affection with which she had been received, she was cheerful, and even happy, especially in the family circle, her spirits were not equal to the enjoyment of gaiety, and instead of being excited, she was depressed.

"She gazed upon a world she scarcely knew,
As seeking not to know it."

Katherine, who always sought for companionship in everything, was very urgent with her to go to various parties in the neighbourhood, but she had hitherto evaded compliance, with a half-promise to go for once, and this was likely to be the last; and she did not like to stand out longer, as Katherine's affectionate heart appeared really set upon her going. Katherine was very
proud of Grace's beauty, and delighted in looking, and making others look at her; also she loved her dearly, and whomsoever she loved, Katherine desired to have continually at her side.

So it was settled Grace was to go to the ball. As it was at no great distance, and as John protested against being early, the young people did not dress until after dinner; and while they were engaged in the duties of the toilette, Lady Livingstone, being *en petit comité* with Magdalen and myself, thus begun:

"Magdalen, have you observed anything between Grace and George or John? Mr. D——, you heard what Miss Ferrers was saying to Lady Daventry this morning? I can hardly believe it—and yet I think there must be something in it, too, for certainly I have not thought either of them looking well lately. Oh, dear, why was I not told of it?"

"But I do not see, dear Lady Livingstone, what you could have done, even if it is as Miss Ferrers supposes; but she may be mis-
taken, although it certainly need not surprise one."

"Surprise one, dear me, no, one need not be surprised at any girl falling in love with engaging young men like George and John; but just somehow I never thought of it. It is no mistake of Adela's, however, for I heard her say that Katherine told her. I must question Katherine about it. It's very odd that monkey never tells me anything."

"Are you quite sure that she said Katherine had told her?" asked Magdalen.

"Oh, perfectly sure; you heard her, Mr. D——, as well as I did. But now, what is to be done? because you know John will be here till after Christmas, and George all the winter: it will never do for Grace to remain. Do you know if she has answered that Mrs. Onslow's letter?"

"I know she has not, it did not require an immediate answer; she was talking to me on the subject this very day."
"Well, and did you make out whether it was George or John she liked best?"

I saw the faintest perceptible smile lurking about the corners of Magdalen's mouth, as she replied to this:

"I meant that Grace was speaking to me on the subject of Mrs. Onslow's letter. You know it contained an invitation to pay a long visit."

"Well, I hope you advised her to accept it?"

"Why, I was inclined to do so, for I think Grace ought to keep up these old friendships of her family. Mrs. Onslow is a most kind person, and in really good society; and she would also have the advantage of masters, which I know she would like,—which I set before her; but—"

"Oh, dear, I suppose she won't go from this now?"

Again I marked the furtive smile.

"I was going to say, she gave as her reasons against accepting the invitation, that
when she spoke to you on the subject you seemed unwilling that she should leave this; and I am sure your wishes would be decisive with her, she feels so very much your kindness and affection."

"She is really a very sweet girl; and I am sure if there was but the wherewithal, I could not wish anything better than that she should marry one of my sons; but as things are, it would never do. I remember now her speaking to me the other day, and I thought it a pity that she should go away for the winter—she is such a good companion for Katherine, and Katherine would miss her so much; indeed, we all should, for she is a most amiable creature; but then I knew nothing of all this, she never hinted it to me."

"Dear lady! I don't think she has the most distant conception of what you allude to, in fact I am certain she has not."

"Magdalen! she must know if she is in love, and who she is in love with."
"But I don't believe she is in love at all,—certainly not with either George or John."

"You don't think she is in love; then why didn't you say so at first? you think it is all an imagination of Adela Ferrers'?

"I thought you were speaking rather of their being in love with Grace:—there may be truth in that, at least as regards George. John's affection for her is at present quite brotherly, if I am a judge of these things."

"Well, there's some comfort in that, but still I think it would be better she did not stay here this winter. I don't believe she would be able to resist George much longer."

The corners of Magdalen's mouth threatened to become quite unmanageable; however, she reduced them to order, and resumed:

"Then, shall I advise Grace to speak to you again before declining Mrs. Onslow?"

"Yes, do so, my dear; or you can say you have been speaking to me about it. I am
quite clear that she had better go, for her own sake as well as for George's."

Further discussion of the subject was stopped by the entrance of the ball-goers, one by one. As they stood together waiting for the carriages, I thought that seldom, even in London—that garden of the fairest flowers of loveliness—had I seen so handsome a group. I have already described my beautiful Grace; —to-night, dressed in pure white, of some diaphonous material, and with the light of a lamp falling on her pale golden hair, she did look so like an angel—I know the comparison is a hackneyed one, but, for my own part, I never felt inclined to apply it to the outward appearance of any one but her.

Then Lady Daventry was one of Eve's loveliest daughters—with large loving blue eyes, and the sweetest mouth, an under lip which looked "as though a bee had newly sting it"—and, truly, if a bee had gone there in search of honey, I think he deserved
blame only on the score of ingratitude—such a complexion, and such showers of nut-brown ringlets, and such a winning ingenuous expression in her fair face. It was a sweet nature—but alas!

Miss Ferrers was a clear brunette, with quantities of silky black hair wound round a small but rather peculiarly shaped head, a delicate aquiline nose, handsome dark eyes, which were spoilt by being set in the Mephistophelian angle, and their expression was not redeemed by that of her mouth; but she had beautiful teeth, and was altogether a person to be remarked in a room—always so perfectly well-dressed, whatever the occasion.

The cavalieri, with one exception, were not unworthy of such fair dames. Lord Daventry was a distinguished-looking man, and Captain Clavering was very handsome, so was George Livingstone; but the friend of the family, dear reader, is, he ventures to flatter himself, more useful than ornamental.
CHAPTER XV.

"Well, young ladies, did you enjoy yourselves last night?" said Lady Livingstone at a late breakfast next morning. "I suppose you all had plenty of partners?"

"Oh, it was such a capital ball," answered Kathie’s ready voice; "but, mamma, Grace was so stupid; there were men by scores dying to dance with her, and she would neither polk nor waltz; she crawled through about three quadrilles. I believe she has conscientious scruples—stuff!"

"All the quadrilles that were danced, Kathie," said Grace, with a smile, "besides
country-dance and reels, and then I was so tired I could not have done more; besides, as I never learned either polka or waltz, my scruples, as you call them, were not altogether out of place."

"Never learned! Then why haven't you made the boys teach you, all the time you have been here; what else are they made for?"

"I wish other young ladies were restrained by similar considerations," observed George. "I had a very heavy handful in one who shall be nameless, and she coolly observed to me, after our exhibition was over, that it was the first time she ever tried the valse à deux temps."

"I thought that young lady appeared to have formed a very vague conception of time, Kathie; but you were not so badly off as I was, George, when my partner, who shall also be nameless, insisted on polking to the deux temps waltz, and brought me into colli-
sion with every other couple. I expected every minute to be rolling on the floor."

"Somebody did get a fall. Who was it?"

"I could not find out," said Miss Ferrers: "I asked several people, but no one knew."

"How ghastly you all look!" exclaimed Katherine; "do let us have the horses, and ride up the hill. It's the only thing after a ball."

"Now, Katherine, do not be so domineering. Just let people please themselves. I am sure Lady Daventry does not look fit to ride up Ben-Ard."

"Oh! I should like it of all things," said Lady Daventry.

But she did look very weary and woebe-gone, this morning. What was the matter with Lady Daventry?

"Then let us all go," resumed Kathie.

"Just be quiet, Katherine; you are always for settling everything. I want Grace to go with me in the carriage to Pitrossie. I am sure she is too tired to take such a ride."
No doubt Lady Livingstone thought so; perhaps her new-born solicitude also suggested that it were well to detach Grace as much as possible from the society of her too-engaging sons. But her diplomacy was doomed to be frustrated, and that by her son Francis.

"Won't any other day do as well to call at Pitrossie, mother? We shall hardly have such another chance for Ben-Ard; and I think a ride would do Grace more good than a drive."

He carried his point. Francis generally carried his point with his mother.

So the horses were ordered, and the ladies went to put on their riding-habits. It was a lovely autumn day, and our road led us along the valley, down which the waters of Ard came dancing to its own music. Not a breath stirred the trees in the haugh, but as we ascended, a fresh pure breeze met us on mountain side, and by the time we had
reached the top, the fatigues of the preceding night were forgotten, and care left far below us.

After an hour or more spent among the highest crags of Ben-Ard, whence the eye swept from the Northern Sea far into the magnificent mountains of ——shire, we mounted to return homeward. Lord Daventry, having letters to write by that day's post, rode on, the rest of the party followed more leisurely.

John Livingstone reined up to join Magdalen and Lady Daventry, who had fallen behind. A few minutes afterwards those in advance were startled and terrified by the sight of two riderless horses galloping down the hill; and retracing their steps a few hundred yards they found Lady Daventry stretched on the ground, and her companions bending over her with faces as pale as her own. John's wore an expression of agony not to be described.
"For her sake, control yourself," I heard Magdalen murmur. Then she added aloud: "Do not raise her head, it may be but a faint—here, wet this handkerchief."

"Magdalen, what has happened?" exclaimed Colonel Livingstone: "how was this?"

"Her horse fell, and I fear her head has been struck; but perhaps she is only stunned. Francis, send James for Dr. Maclean, and go yourself for the carriage; you will best break it to your mother and poor Lord Daventry—We must get her home at once. Some more water—quick! dear John, she is opening her eyes—she is not dead! Oh! God be thanked!"

Every one echoed Magdalen's thanksgiving—and as for poor John, his tears were streaming fast, which surprised me, when I had time to think of it, for I had always thought John was remarkably cool and composed on all emergencies.
Magdalen sent us all to the nearest cottage to procure some means of carrying Lady Daventry homewards. John staid to supply her with water; a faint flush mantled the lady's deathlike cheek as she opened her eyes; but when we returned she lay still and pale as before.

It was only a swoon, however, her shoulder was dislocated and she was severely bruised; but no more serious mischief had been done—enough, however, to shake her delicate frame, and retain her at Invercarron for several weeks. Her lord meanwhile, finding no danger was to be apprehended, and having important business at home, left her with those kind friends in whom, as he told Lady Livingstone, he had every confidence.

This catastrophe and a change in the weather, put an end to out-of-door amusements, and indeed to our gaieties generally,
at which Kathie grieved a good deal; for as I have already hinted she was not much given to domestic avocations, and excepting reading, had scarcely any in-door employment. As long as she had any one to talk to, however, she could get through the day, and Adela Ferrers was always ready to amuse her with piquante anecdotes of London life, in which she began to take more interest than Magdalen thought good for her; but Magdalen was much occupied at this time, and spent a good deal of her spare time with Lady Daventry in whom she was much interested. One day, however, she found an opportunity to admonish both the young ladies on the subject, though her speech was addressed only to Kathie. They had been discussing pretty freely the character of a celebrated beauty, whose conduct by some was suspected of more than levity.

"Dear Kathie," said Magdalen, "I wish
you would not repeat such things, even to me; it is such a pernicious habit, and it grows upon one insensibly. I wish you would not listen to those wicked stories."

"But, Maudlin, I knew them all before, and I don't believe them; besides, Mrs. Macallister was only telling me what was said of Lady Barbara by the Duchess of Sheffield, who is known to be the greatest scandal-monger in Christendom. Mrs. Macallister does not believe them herself."

"Then why repeat them? it is only giving the scandal a wider circulation."

"Why, she wanted me to know on whose authority they rested, and to contradict them."

"She might have done that without entering into detail; it would have been sufficient to say, 'I do not believe the stories against Lady Barbara, they rest on no better authority than that of the Duchess of Sheffield.'"

"But I am afraid," interposed Adela,
"that they rest on too broad a foundation of truth to be generally disbelieved. I am sure I liked Lady Barbara very much; but such shocking things were said of her, really one did not like to be acquainted with her—though I don't believe half of them were true, and they might be altogether false."

"Then I think one might give her the benefit of the doubt, poor thing; so young and beautiful, and I fear not very happily married. I thought you were very intimate with her, Miss Ferrers?"

"Oh, you know, after the first esclandre had died away a little, and when she was received at Court, it was nobody's business to turn their backs upon her; but everybody believes the story about the châtelaine, and that could never be explained. In fact, I have no doubt she was terribly indiscreet, poor dear."

"Indiscreet perhaps, there is however a
difference, which it seems to me is often overlooked, between indiscretion and guilt. But what I want to impress upon you, dear Kathie, is the evil of giving any countenance to scandal, be it true or false; it cannot possibly do good, it may do incalculable mischief, and the effect of such conversation on one's own mind is always hurtful. I often think, with a shudder, how completely the reputation of the most innocent woman is at the mercy of an unscrupulous tongue. What, for instance, do you or I know of Lady Barbara Vane, except what we have heard from Mrs. Macallister and others? She may be innocent; but we have learned to look upon her as suspected, for it is impossible altogether to resist the impression which such stories make upon the mind."

"I believe it is generally granted," said Adela, "that no one is suspected without having given some cause, and I am sure poor
dear Lady Barbara's best friend would scarcely maintain that she had given no cause."

"That may be, and I dare say, as a general rule, there is truth in it; but when you reflect how quickly an ill-natured story is taken up—how little careful we are to ascertain the truth of that which we hear or repeat—how thoughtlessly we often speak, and how ready we are to believe the worst of each other—I think you must grant that it is a rule liable to many exceptions; unless we know the character of the slandered person to be above suspicion—we are too ready to take it for granted that there must be some foundation for the story; and though a woman may live down scandal, it may not the less have cost her many bitter moments, and lost her the friendship of those who shun the society of a suspected woman."

"And no great loss that, I am sure," exclaimed Katherine. "The friendship that
can't stand through good report and bad report, is not worth having. I am sure, Maudlin, you would not cast off a friend on account of any little peccadillos she might fall into—far less the bare suspicion of them.”

“Perhaps not, dear—but I do not say that I would choose for my friend a woman I had heard lightly spoken of, unless I had strong reason to believe her innocent, and wished to prove my belief; and in that case especially, I would not listen to any stories against her.”

“That is a hit at me,” said Katherine, “because you know I am determined to make Lady Barbara’s acquaintance—and so I am, as soon as I have a chance. I saw her at the ——— meeting, and she is so handsome —such eyes and such a profile. I don’t wonder at all the men raving about her as they do.”

“She is quite a man’s beauty,” observed
Adela; "and she certainly is very handsome, and has that beautiful complexion which I admire so much. People do say she rouges, but I don't believe it; though one hardly ever does see that very soft and brilliant colour in nature."

"I'm sure she doesn't rouge," said Katherine, "for I saw her get as white as a sheet, when the Duchess of Sheffield came into the room, and the next moment she flushed crimson, and her eyes actually blazed—how magnificent she did look then! I am sure she knows what the Duchess has said of her. She looked as if she could have torn her into small pieces, then and there, with pleasure—and small blame to her."

"That does not look as if there were nothing in the stories," observed Adela.

"I do not see that it corroborates them at all," said Magdalen. "Knowing herself innocent, she might naturally feel the utmost
indignation against one who had so cruelly injured her. But, dear Kathie, I would have you weigh the matter well, before you rush into an intimacy with Lady Barbara. Granting her innocence of anything beyond indiscretion, I hardly think she would be the best of companions for you, and you are not called upon to take up her defence—nor are you in a position to do so with any effect—you would probably do harm when you meant good.”

“Well, well, Maudlin, don’t alarm yourself. I dare say I shall not be exposed to the risk of Lady Barbara’s acquaintance, till my principles have had time to be settled; but the best of it all is, that Mrs. Macallister says the Duchess is by no means a bad-hearted woman, only she cannot help repeating every story she hears, without considering consequences.”

“And with additions, I dare say; I think
it very possible that she may not be what one would call a bad-hearted woman; but you know Kathie,

"Evil is wrought by want of thought,
As well as by want of heart,"

and by her inconsiderate, unscrupulous habit of retailing every story she hears, or imagines, she may work more complete ruin than a more bad-hearted person, who has not that evil propensity. It only strengthens my conviction of the sin and danger of listening to scandal. What the ear willingly gathers, the tongue, it is to be feared, will ere long, readily spread abroad."

"I know you are right, Maudlin—you always are—though you are a little stern sometimes; but it is quite true, I have got into the habit of gossiping, lately; I used not to be given to it."

"I know that, dear, therefore I am the more
anxious to put you on your guard against it. It is yet within your own control I do believe, for you have no innate love of it. But it rests with yourself to check the growing habit.”

“If it rests with myself, you know I shall not get the better of it. You know I never did cure myself of any single fault in my life, and it is not likely that I shall begin now, when you are going away too. Oh, Maudlin, why do you go and leave me to the evil of my ways? Is it kind of you?”

Magdalen, thus appealed to, smiled sadly.

“Dearest Kathie,” said she, “you know it is a grief to me to leave you; but,” added she (Miss Ferrars having left the room), “it is yet a greater grief to hear you speak thus. Why say you cannot overcome a fault? Do you really think that any one ever earnestly and perseveringly endeavoured to do so, seeking God’s help, and failed?”
"Perhaps not; but I cannot be earnest and persevering about anything, and"—she paused.

"But, dearest," resumed Magdalen, "cannot we ask for strength to become so. Every good and perfect gift cometh from above, and if we use the measure of strength we have, more will be given; it is by exercise our bodies are strengthened; a limb unused, would, in time, become powerless, and so will the strength of the soul decay and perish if it is never put forth; and then when we remember who is our Righteousness and our Strength, surely none need despair of victory. Dear child, is there not comfort and encouragement in this?"

"Oh, Magdalen, if I were like you; it seems all plain and clear to you, but you cannot know the difficulties that others meet with; there is such a thing as not being able to believe these promises."
"I know there is, that is, they are not believed fully, or even in such a degree as to bring any comfort; but then you know there is frequent encouragement given to them who are of little faith. If we can but say, 'Help Thou mine unbelief,' we may be sure that prayer is heard. Faith, too, must be exercised; it will not grow else."

"But if there is none to begin with?"

"I do not believe any human creature is absolutely devoid of faith, unless he have hardened himself in sin. Instinctively we have faith in an unseen Power; and we, born in a Christian land, have been put in the right way, and furnished with a guide. Do you think that any ever studied the Scriptures with patience and prayer, making Christ's commandments the rule of his life, and failed to find peace at last? Sooner it may come to some than to others, from diversity of circumstances or constitution of mind, but
sooner or later, thus sought, it must come to all. He who invites all to come to Him, has also said, He will in no wise cast out one who comes. Dearest Kathie, can you not believe, can you not try to believe this?"

Katherine did not answer, and her face was hidden; Magdalen went on:

"Oh, if I could but prevail on you to try —to believe that faith may come, though now you do not feel its movings, I should leave you with a lighter heart. I know you are not happy, Kathie, for all your light words and merry laughter; I know your spirit is often in darkness, and that only in forgetting yourself do you find a false and hollow peace; and it grieves me—oh! it grieves me so, my own dear Kathie. Will you think of what I have said when I am away? Will you try for my sake?"

Katherine looked up with eyes full of tears,
and then, throwing her arms round Magdalen’s neck, said:

"If I did not know it was of no use for me to promise anything, I would promise to do what you ask me, but I know I should fail: you must pray for me, Magdalen."

"I will—I do—dearest; but no man can be surety for his brother, and unless you are taught to pray for yourself, no other prayer will avail. But I will not say more just now—forgive me if I have wearied you. We must part soon, and as it may be long before we meet again, I would fain let my last words be worthy of your remembrance, and of my true affection, Kathie,—for I love you very dearly."

This conversation took place a very few days before Magdalen left Invercarron. It was the last, though not by any means the first, she held with Katherine on the subject into which it merged when Adela Ferrers left
the room. To Magdalen, Katherine opened her mind more fully than to most people, and deeply did Magdalen grieve over the unsettled restless spirit thus disclosed. She tried to convince her by such arguments as the foregoing, that rest and peace were to be found; but although Katherine listened quietly, and even seemed to take a pleasure in hearing her, it was evident her words carried no weight, and I doubt whether these discussions, since they did no good, were not worse than useless, for the listener's ear became accustomed to the sound, and the oft-repeated words lost something of their force.

Good, sensible and sincere, Magdalen's intellect was not of an order to cope with her pupils, which was singularly subtle and penetrating—in an instant seizing upon the weak points of an argument, and overturning the whole; added to which, it was a mind which refused to yield belief to anything
which was not capable of mathematical demonstration.

And yet Katherine's religious tendencies were towards Romanism; such are the contradictions of human nature.

The solution, whereof I take to be, this:

First, Weary of her doubts, she vainly thought to find rest in that Church which lays claim to infallibility, and requires the unquestioning faith of its disciples, thus relieving them of much individual responsibility.

Secondly, Her intense love of the beautiful was attracted by the gorgeous pageantry of worship which appeals so directly to the senses, the undimmed glory of ages only adding to its power over the enthusiast's mind.

Yes, I can well understand the power to seduce the heart, unfortified by a conviction
of simple truth, or led astray by the sophisms of her Anglican daughter, which is wielded by that time-honoured Church, so well, that I almost think every mind of highly poetic temperament, has at one time or other, especially if brought under her influence, felt a sympathetic admiration for her ancient ritual, which gathers the costliest treasures of earth and sea, the fairest works of the sculptor and the painter; and music's holiest harmonies to offer up in the stately and beautiful temples which her children have raised to God.

But the picture has a darker side, and there is a more acceptable service. Even Magdalen—Magdalen who among the Livingstones was reckoned for the sternest of Puritans and Calvinists—had felt what I have described; but she clung all the more fervently to her own simple faith, though she
had sympathy for all true believers. But she very much dreaded for Katherine the Romanising influences of the day, feeling sure, that for her, there would be no peace in that Church which she might not find in her own; but that, on the contrary, being disappointed in her reputation, she would sink into utter hopelessness and misery.

For happiness, without a sense of God's love, Magdalen conceived to be impossible to one of Katherine's nature; as indeed true happiness is, under such circumstances, impossible to any; but Katherine was one to whom it was peculiarly essential. She sunned herself in the affection of others; and what human affection is all-sufficient to the cravings of the human heart. She had the love of many, yet she was not happy—never could be in her present state. So Magdalen
thought, and she was right, though Katherine knew it not, but only felt that she was of the miserable, too miserable, to make an effort for her own rescue.

END OF VOL. I.