GEORGE MACDONALD

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I.
THE EARRING

"Come oot o' the gutter, ye nickum!" cried, in harsh, half-masculine voice, a woman standing on the curbstone of a short, narrow, dirty lane, at right angles to an important thoroughfare, itself none of the widest or cleanest. She was dressed in dark petticoat and print wrapper. One of her shoes was down at the heel, and discovered a great hole in her stocking. Had her black hair been brushed and displayed, it would have revealed a thready glitter of grey, but all that was now visible of it was only two or three untidy tresses that dropped from under a cap of black net and green ribbons, which looked as if she had slept in it. Her face must have been handsome when it was young and fresh; but was now beginning to look tattooed, though whether the colour was from without or from within, it would have been hard to determine. Her black eyes looked resolute, almost fierce, above her straight, well-formed nose. Yet evidently circumstance clave fast to her. She had never risen above it, and was now plainly subjected to it.

About thirty yards from her, on the farther side of the main street, and just opposite the mouth of the lane, a child, apparently about six, but in reality about eight, was down on his knees raking with both hands in the grey dirt of the kennel. At the woman's cry he lifted his head, ceased his search, raised himself, but without getting up, and looked at her. They were notable eyes out of which he looked—of such a deep blue were they, and having such long lashes; but more notable far from their expression, the nature of which, although a certain witchery of confidence was at once discoverable, was not to be determined without the help of the whole face, whose diffused meaning seemed in them to deepen almost to speech. Whatever was at the heart of that expression, it was something that enticed question and might want investigation. The face as well as the eyes was lovely—not very clean, and not too regular for hope of a fine development, but chiefly remarkable from a general effect of something I can only call luminosity. The hair, which stuck out from his head in every direction, like a round fur cap, would have been of the red-gold kind, had it not been sunburned into a sort of human hay. An odd creature altogether the child appeared, as, shaking the gutter-drops from his little dirty hands, he gazed from his bare knees on the curbstone at the woman of rebuke. It was but for a moment. The next he was down, raking in the gutter again.

The woman looked angry, and took a step forward; but the sound of a sharp imperative little bell behind her, made her turn at once, and re-enter the shop from which she had just issued,

following a man whose pushing the door wider had set the bell ringing. Above the door was a small board, nearly square, upon which was painted in lead-colour on a black ground the words, "Licensed to sell beer, spirits, and tobacco to be drunk on the premises." There was no other sign. "Them 'at likes my whusky 'ill no aye be speerin' my name," said Mistress Croale. As the day went on she would have more and more customers, and in the evening on to midnight, her parlour would be well filled. Then she would be always at hand, and the spring of the bell would be turned aside from the impact of the opening door. Now the bell was needful to recall her from house affairs.

"The likin' 'at craturs his for clean dirt! He's been at it this hale half-hoor!" she murmured to herself as she poured from a black bottle into a pewter measure a gill of whisky for the pale-faced toper who stood on the other side of the counter: far gone in consumption, he could not get through the forenoon without his morning. "I wad like," she went on, as she replaced the bottle without having spoken a word to her customer, whose departure was now announced with the same boisterous alacrity as his arrival by the shrill-toned bell—"I wad like, for's father's sake, honest man! to thraw Gibbie's lug. That likin' for dirt I canna fathom nor bide."

Meantime the boys attention seemed entirely absorbed in the gutter. Whatever vehicle passed before him, whatever footsteps behind, he never lifted his head, but went creeping slowly on his knees along the curb still searching down the flow of the sluggish,

nearly motionless current.

It was a grey morning towards the close of autumn. The days began and ended with a fog, but often between, as golden a sunshine glorified the streets of the grey city as any that ripened purple grapes. To-day the mist had lasted longer than usual—had risen instead of dispersing; but now it was thinning, and at length, like a slow blossoming of the sky-flower, the sun came melting through the cloud. Between the gables of two houses, a ray fell upon the pavement and the gutter. It lay there a very type of purity, so pure that, rest where it might, it destroyed every shadow of defilement that sought to mingle with it. Suddenly the boy made a dart upon all fours, and pounced like a creature of prey upon something in the kennel. He had found what he had been looking for so long. He sprang to his feet and bounded with it into the sun, rubbing it as he ran upon what he had for trousers, of which there was nothing below the knees but a few streamers, and nothing above the knees but the body of the garment, which had been—I will not say made for, but last worn by a boy three times his size. His feet, of course, were bare as well as his knees and legs. But though they were dirty, red, and rough, they were nicely shaped little legs, and the feet were dainty.

The sunbeams he sought came down through the smoky air like a Jacob's ladder, and he stood at the foot of it like a little prodigal angel that wanted to go home again, but feared it was too much inclined for him to manage the ascent in the present condition of his wings. But all he did want was to see in the light

of heaven what the gutter had yielded him. He held up his find in the radiance and regarded it admiringly. It was a little earring of amethyst-coloured glass, and in the sun looked lovely. The boy was in an ecstasy over it. He rubbed it on his sleeve, sucked it to clear it from the last of the gutter, and held it up once more in the sun, where, for a few blissful moments, he contemplated it speechless. He then caused it to disappear somewhere about his garments—I will not venture to say in a pocket—and ran off, his little bare feet sounding thud, thud, thud on the pavement, and the collar of his jacket sticking halfway up the back of his head, and threatening to rub it bare as he ran. Through street after street he sped—all built of granite, all with flagged footways, and all paved with granite blocks—a hard, severe city, not beautiful or stately with its thick, grey, sparkling walls, for the houses were not high, and the windows were small, yet in the better parts, nevertheless, handsome as well as massive and strong.

To the boy the great city was but a house of many rooms, all for his use, his sport, his life. He did not know much of what lay within the houses; but that only added the joy of mystery to possession: they were jewel-closets, treasure-caves, indeed, with secret fountains of life; and every street was a channel into which they overflowed.

It was in one of quite a third-rate sort that the urchin at length ceased his trot, and drew up at the door of a baker's shop—a divided door, opening in the middle by a latch of bright brass. But the child did not lift the latch—only raised himself on tiptoe

by the help of its handle, to look through the upper half of the door, which was of glass, into the beautiful shop. The floor was of flags, fresh sanded; the counter was of deal, scrubbed as white almost as flour; on the shelves were heaped the loaves of the morning's baking, along with a large store of scones and rolls and baps—the last, the best bread in the world—biscuits hard and soft, and those brown discs of delicate flaky piecrust, known as buns. And the smell that came through the very glass, it seemed to the child, was as that of the tree of life in the Paradise of which he had never heard. But most enticing of all to the eyes of the little wanderer of the street were the penny-loaves, hot smoking from the oven—which fact is our first window into the ordered nature of the child. For the main point which made them more attractive than all the rest to him was, that sometimes he did have a penny, and that a penny loaf was the largest thing that could be had for a penny in the shop. So that, lawless as he looked, the desires of the child were moderate, and his imagination wrought within the bounds of reason. But no one who has never been blessed with only a penny to spend and a mighty hunger behind it, can understand the interest with which he stood there and through the glass watched the bread, having no penny and only the hunger. There is at least one powerful bond, though it may not always awake sympathy, between mudlark and monarch—that of hunger. No one has yet written the poetry of hunger—has built up in verse its stairs of grand ascent—from such hunger as Gibbie's for a penny-loaf up—no, no, not to an alderman's

feast; that is the way down the mouldy cellar-stair—but up the white marble scale to the hunger after righteousness whose very longings are bliss.

Behind the counter sat the baker's wife, a stout, fresh-coloured woman, looking rather dull, but simple and honest. She was knitting, and if not dreaming, at least dozing over her work, for she never saw the forehead and eyes which, like a young ascending moon, gazed at her over the horizon of the opaque half of her door. There was no greed in those eyes—only much quiet interest. He did not want to get in; had to wait, and while waiting beguiled the time by beholding. He knew that Mysie, the baker's daughter, was at school, and that she would be home within half an hour. He had seen her with tear-filled eyes as she went, had learned from her the cause, and had in consequence unwittingly roused Mrs. Croale's anger, and braved it when aroused. But though he was waiting for her, such was the absorbing power of the spectacle before him that he never heard her approaching footsteps.

"Lat me in," said Mysie, with conscious dignity and a touch of indignation at being impeded on the very threshold of her father's shop.

The boy started and turned, but instead of moving out of the way, began searching in some mysterious receptacle hid in the recesses of his rags. A look of anxiety once appeared, but the same moment it vanished, and he held out in his hand the little drop of amethystine splendour. Mysie's face changed, and she

clutched it eagerly.

"That's rale guid o' ye, wee Gibbie!" she cried. "Whaur did ye get it?"

He pointed to the kennel, and drew back from the door.

"I thank ye," she said heartily, and pressing down the thumbstall of the latch, went in.

"Wha's that ye're colloguin' wi', Mysie?" asked her mother, somewhat severely, but without lifting her eyes from her wires. "Ye maunna be speykin' to loons i' the street."

"It's only wee Gibbie, mither," answered the girl in a tone of confidence.

"Ou weel!" returned the mother, "he's no like the lave o' loons."

"But what had ye to say till him?" she resumed, as if afraid her leniency might be taken advantage of. "He's no fit company for the likes o' you, 'at his a father an' mither, an' a chop (shop). Ye maun hae little to say to sic rintheroot laddies."

"Gibbie has a father, though they say he never hid nae mither," said the child.

"Troth, a fine father!" rejoined the mother, with a small scornful laugh. "Na, but he's something to mak mention o'! Sic a father, lassie, as it wad be tellin' him he had nane! What said ye till 'im?"

"I bit thankit 'im, 'cause I tint my drop as I gaed to the schuil i' the mornin', an' he fan't till me, an' was at the chopdoor waitin' to gie me't back. They say he's aye fin'in' things."

"He's a guid-hertit cratur!" said the mother,—"for ane, that is, 'at's been sae ill broucht up."

She rose, took from the shelf a large piece of bread, composed of many adhering penny-loaves, detached one, and went to the door.

"Here, Gibbie!" she cried as she opened it; "here's a fine piece to ye."

But no Gibbie was there. Up and down the street not a child was to be seen. A sandboy with a donkey cart was the sole human arrangement in it. The baker's wife drew back, shut the door and resumed her knitting.

CHAPTER II.
SIR GEORGE

The sun was hot for an hour or two in the middle of the day, but even then in the shadow dwelt a cold breath—of the winter, or of death—of something that humanity felt unfriendly. To Gibbie, however, bare-legged, bare-footed, almost bare-bodied as he was, sun or shadow made small difference, except as one of the musical intervals of life that make the melody of existence. His bare feet knew the difference on the flags, and his heart recognized unconsciously the secret as it were of a meaning and a symbol, in the change from the one to the other, but he was almost as happy in the dull as in the bright day. Hardy through hardship, he knew nothing better than a constant good-humoured sparring with nature and circumstance for the privilege of being, enjoyed what came to him thoroughly, never mourned over what he had not, and, like the animals, was at peace. For the bliss of the animals lies in this, that, on their lower level, they shadow the bliss of those—few at any moment on the earth—who do not "look before and after, and pine for what is not," but live in the holy carelessness of the eternal now. Gibbie by no means belonged to the higher order, was as yet, indeed, not much better than a very blessed little animal.

To him the city was all a show. He knew many of the people

—some of them who thought no small things of themselves—better than they would have chosen he or any one else should know them. He knew all the peripatetic vendors, most of the bakers, most of the small grocers and tradespeople. Animal as he was, he was laying in a great stock for the time when he would be something more, for the time of reflection, whenever that might come. Chiefly, his experience was a wonderful provision for the future perception of character; for now he knew to a nicety how any one of his large acquaintance would behave to him in circumstances within the scope of that experience. If any such little vagabond rises in the scale of creation, he carries with him from the street an amount of material serving to the knowledge of human nature, human need, human aims, human relations in the business of life, such as hardly another can possess. Even the poet, greatly wise in virtue of his sympathy, will scarcely understand a given human condition so well as the man whose vital tentacles have been in contact with it for years.

When Gibbie was not looking in at a shop-window, or turning on one heel to take in all at a sweep, he was oftenest seen trotting. Seldom he walked. A gentle trot was one of his natural modes of being. And though this day he had been on the trot all the sunshine through, nevertheless, when the sun was going down there was wee Gibbie upon the trot in the chilling and darkening streets. He had not had much to eat. He had been very near having a penny loaf. Half a cookie, which a stormy child had thrown away to ease his temper, had done further

and perhaps better service in easing Gibbie's hunger. The greengrocer woman at the entrance of the court where his father lived, a good way down the same street in which he had found the lost earring, had given him a small yellow turnip—to Gibbie nearly as welcome as an apple. A fishwife from Finstone with a creel on her back, had given him all his hands could hold of the seaweed called dulse, presumably not from its sweetness, although it is good eating. She had added to the gift a small crab, but that he had carried to the seashore and set free, because it was alive. These, the half-cookie, the turnip, and the dulse, with the smell of the baker's bread, was all he had had. It had been rather one of his meagre days. But it is wonderful upon how little those rare natures capable of making the most of things will live and thrive. There is a great deal more to be got out of things than is generally got out of them, whether the thing be a chapter of the Bible or a yellow turnip, and the marvel is that those who use the most material should so often be those that show the least result in strength or character. A superstitious priest-ridden Catholic may, in the kingdom of heaven, be high beyond sight of one who counts himself the broadest of English churchmen. Truly Gibbie got no fat out of his food, but he got what was far better. What he carried—I can hardly say under or in, but along with those rags of his, was all muscle—small, but hard, and healthy, and knotting up like whipcord. There are all degrees of health in poverty as well as in riches, and Gibbie's health was splendid. His senses also were marvellously acute. I have already hinted at his gift

for finding things. His eyes were sharp, quick, and roving, and then they went near the ground, he was such a little fellow. His success, however, not all these considerations could well account for, and he was regarded as born with a special luck in finding. I doubt if sufficient weight was given to the fact that, even when he was not so turning his mind it strayed in that direction, whence, if any object cast its reflected rays on his retina, those rays never failed to reach his mind also. On one occasion he picked up the pocket-book a gentleman had just dropped, and, in mingled fun and delight, was trying to put it in its owner's pocket unseen, when he collared him, and, had it not been for the testimony of a young woman who, coming behind, had seen the whole, would have handed him over to the police. After all, he remained in doubt, the thing seemed so incredible. He did give him a penny, however, which Gibbie at once spent upon a loaf.

It was not from any notions of honesty—he knew nothing about it—that he always did what he could to restore the things he found; the habit came from quite another cause. When he had no clue to the owner, he carried the thing found to his father, who generally let it lie a while, and at length, if it was of nature convertible, turned it into drink.

While Gibbie thus lived in the streets like a townsparrow—as like a human bird without storehouse or barn as boy could well be—the human father of him would all day be sitting in a certain dark court, as hard at work as an aching head and a bloodless system would afford. The said court was off the narrowest part

of a long, poverty-stricken street, bearing a name of evil omen, for it was called the Widdiehill—the place of the gallows. It was entered by a low archway in the middle of an old house, around which yet clung a musty fame of departed grandeur and ancient note. In the court, against a wing of the same house, rose an outside stair, leading to the first floor; under the stair was a rickety wooden shed; and in the shed sat the father of Gibbie, and cobbled boots and shoes as long as, at this time of the year, the light lasted. Up that stair, and two more inside the house, he went to his lodging, for he slept in the garret. But when or how he got to bed, George Galbraith never knew, for then, invariably, he was drunk. In the morning, however, he always found himself in it—generally with an aching head, and always with a mingled disgust at and desire for drink. During the day, alas! the disgust departed, while the desire remained, and strengthened with the approach of evening. All day he worked with might and main, such might and main as he had—worked as if for his life, and all to procure the means of death. No one ever sought to treat him, and from no one would he accept drink. He was a man of such inborn honesty, that the usurping demon of a vile thirst had not even yet, at the age of forty, been able to cast it out. The last little glory-cloud of his origin was trailing behind him—but yet it trailed. Doubtless it needs but time to make of a drunkard a thief, but not yet, even when longing was at the highest, would he have stolen a forgotten glass of whisky; and still, often in spite of sickness and aches innumerable, George laboured that he

might have wherewith to make himself drunk honestly. Strange honesty! Wee Gibbie was his only child, but about him or his well-being he gave himself almost as little trouble as Gibbie caused him! Not that he was hard-hearted; if he had seen the child in want, he would, at the drunkest, have shared his whisky with him; if he had fancied him cold, he would have put his last garment upon him; but to his whisky-dimmed eyes the child scarcely seemed to want anything, and the thought never entered his mind that, while Gibbie always looked smiling and contented, his father did so little to make him so. He had at the same time a very low opinion of himself and his deservings, and justly, for his consciousness had dwindled into little more than a live thirst. He did not do well for himself, neither did men praise him; and he shamefully neglected his child; but in one respect, and that a most important one, he did well by his neighbours: he gave the best of work, and made the lowest of charges. In no other way was he for much good. And yet I would rather be that drunken cobbler than many a "fair professor," as Bunyan calls him. A grasping merchant ranks infinitely lower than such a drunken cobbler. Thank God, the Son of Man is the judge, and to him will we plead the cause of such—yea, and of worse than they—for He will do right. It may be well for drunkards that they are social outcasts, but is there no intercession to be made for them—no excuse to be pleaded? Alas! the poor wretches would storm the kingdom of peace by the inspiration of the enemy. Let us try to understand George Galbraith. His very existence the

sense of a sunless, dreary, cold-winded desert, he was evermore confronted, in all his resolves after betterment, by the knowledge that with the first eager mouthful of the strange element, a rosy dawn would begin to flush the sky, a mist of green to cover the arid waste, a wind of song to ripple the air, and at length the misery of the day would vanish utterly, and the night throb with dreams. For George was by nature no common man. At heart he was a poet—weak enough, but capable of endless delight. The time had been when now and then he read a good book and dreamed noble dreams. Even yet the stuff of which such dreams are made, fluttered in particoloured rags about his life; and colour is colour even on a scarecrow.

He had had a good mother, and his father was a man of some character, both intellectually and socially. Now and then, it is too true, he had terrible bouts of drinking; but all the time between he was perfectly sober. He had given his son more than a fair education; and George, for his part, had trotted through the curriculum of Elphinstone College not altogether without distinction. But beyond this his father had entirely neglected his future, not even revealing to him the fact—of which, indeed, he was himself but dimly aware—that from wilful oversight on his part and design on that of others, his property had all but entirely slipped from his possession.

While his father was yet alive, George married the daughter of a small laird in a neighbouring county—a woman of some education, and great natural refinement. He took her home to

the ancient family house in the city—the same in which he now occupied a garret, and under whose outer stair he now cobbled shoes. There, during his father's life, they lived in peace and tolerable comfort, though in a poor enough way. It was all, even then, that the wife could do to make both ends meet; nor would her relations, whom she had grievously offended by her marriage, afford her the smallest assistance. Even then, too, her husband was on the slippery incline; but as long as she lived she managed to keep him within the bounds of what is called respectability. She died, however, soon after Gibbie was born; and then George began to lose himself altogether. The next year his father died, and creditors appeared who claimed everything. Mortgaged land and houses, with all upon and in them, were sold, and George left without a penny or any means of winning a livelihood, while already he had lost the reputation that might have introduced him to employment. For heavy work he was altogether unfit; and had it not been for a bottle companion—a merry, hard-drinking shoemaker—he would have died of starvation or sunk into beggary.

This man taught him his trade, and George was glad enough to work at it, both to deaden the stings of conscience and memory, and to procure the means of deadening them still further. But even here was something in the way of improvement, for hitherto he had applied himself to nothing, his being one of those dreamful natures capable of busy exertion for a time, but ready to collapse into disgust with every kind of effort.

How Gibbie had got thus far alive was a puzzle not a creature could have solved. It must have been by charity and ministration of more than one humble woman, but no one now claimed any particular interest in him—except Mrs. Croale, and hers was not very tender. It was a sad sight to some eyes to see him roving the streets, but an infinitely sadder sight was his father, even when bent over his work, with his hands and arms and knees going as if for very salvation. What thoughts might then be visiting his poor worn-out brain I cannot tell; but he looked the pale picture of misery. Doing his best to restore to service the nearly shapeless boots of carter or beggar, he was himself fast losing the very idea of his making, consumed heart and soul with a hellish thirst. For the thirst of the drunkard is even more of the soul than of the body. When the poor fellow sat with his drinking companions in Mistress Croale's parlour, seldom a flash broke from the reverie in which he seemed sunk, to show in what region of fancy his spirit wandered, or to lighten the dulness that would not unfrequently invade that forecourt of hell. For even the damned must at times become aware of what they are, and then surely a terrible though momentary hush must fall upon the forsaken region. Yet those drinking companions would have missed George Galbraith, silent as he was, and but poorly responsive to the wit and humour of the rest; for he was always courteous, always ready to share what he had, never looking beyond the present tumbler—altogether a genial, kindly, honest nature. Sometimes, when two or three of them happened to

meet elsewhere, they would fall to wondering why the silent man sought their company, seeing he both contributed so little to the hilarity of the evening, and seemed to derive so little enjoyment from it. But I believe their company was necessary as well as the drink to enable him to elude his conscience and feast with his imagination. Was it that he knew they also fought misery by investments in her bonds—that they also were of those who by Beelzebub would cast out Beelzebub—therefore felt at home, and with his own?

CHAPTER III.
MISTRESS CROALE

The house at which they met had yet not a little character remaining. Mistress Croale had come in for a derived worthiness, in the memory, yet lingering about the place, of a worthy aunt deceased, and always encouraged in herself a vague idea of obligation to live up to it. Hence she had made it a rule to supply drink only so long as her customers kept decent—that is, so long as they did not quarrel aloud, and put her in danger of a visit from the police; tell such tales as offended her modesty; utter oaths of any peculiarly atrocious quality; or defame the Sabbath Day, the Kirk, or the Bible. On these terms, and so long as they paid for what they had, they might get as drunk as they pleased, without the smallest offence to Mistress Croale. But if the least unquestionable infringement of her rules occurred, she would pounce upon the shameless one with sudden and sharp reproof. I doubt not that, so doing, she cherished a hope of recommending herself above, and making deposits in view of a coming balance-sheet. The result for this life so far was, that, by these claims to respectability, she had gathered a clientele of douce, well-disposed drunkards, who rarely gave her any trouble so long as they were in the house though sometimes she had reason to be anxious about the fate of individuals of them after they left it.

Another peculiarity in her government was that she would rarely give drink to a woman. "Na, na," she would say, "what has a wuman to dee wi' strong drink! Lat the men dee as they like, we canna help them." She made exception in behalf of her personal friends; and, for herself, was in the way of sipping—only sipping, privately, on account of her "trouble," she said—by which she meant some complaint, speaking of it as if it were generally known, although of the nature of it nobody had an idea. The truth was that, like her customers, she also was going down the hill, justifying to herself every step of her descent. Until lately, she had been in the way of going regularly to church, and she did go occasionally yet, and always took the yearly sacrament; but the only result seemed to be that she abounded the more in finding justifications, or, where they were not to be had, excuses, for all she did. Probably the stirring of her conscience made this the more necessary to her peace.

If the Lord were to appear in person amongst us, how much would the sight of him do for the sinners of our day? I am not sure that many like Mistress Croale would not go to him. She was not a bad woman, but slowly and surely growing worse.

That morning, as soon as the customer whose entrance had withdrawn her from her descent on Gibbie, had gulped down his dram, wiped his mouth with his blue cotton handkerchief, settled his face into the expression of a drink of water, gone demurely out, and crossed to the other side of the street, she would have returned to the charge, but was prevented by the immediately

following entrance of the Rev. Clement Sclater—the minister of her parish, recently appointed. He was a man between young and middle-aged, an honest fellow, zealous to perform the duties of his office, but with notions of religion very beggarly. How could it be otherwise when he knew far more of what he called the Divine decrees than he did of his own heart, or the needs and miseries of human nature? At the moment, Mistress Croale was standing with her back to the door, reaching up to replace the black bottle on its shelf, and did not see the man she heard enter.

"What's yer wull?" she said indifferently.

Mr. Sclater made no answer, waiting for her to turn and face him, which she did the sooner for his silence. Then she saw a man unknown to her, evidently, from his white neckcloth and funereal garments, a minister, standing solemn, with wide-spread legs, and round eyes of displeasure, expecting her attention.

"What's yer wull, sir?" she repeated, with more respect, but less cordiality than at first.

"If you ask my will," he replied, with some pomposity, for who that has just gained an object of ambition can be humble?—"it is that you shut up this whisky shop, and betake yourself to a more decent way of life in my parish."

"My certie! but ye're no blate (over-modest) to craw sae lood i' my hoose, an' that's a nearer fit nor a perris!" she cried, flaring up in wrath both at the nature and rudeness of the address. "Alloo me to tell ye, sir, ye're the first 'at ever daured threep my hoose was no a dacent ane."

"I said nothing about your house. It was your shop I spoke of," said the minister, not guiltless of subterfuge.

"An' what's my chop but my hoose? Haith! my hoose wad be o' fell sma' consideration wantin' the chop. Tak ye heed o' beirin' fause witness, sir."

"I said nothing, and know nothing, against yours more than any other shop for the sale of drink in my parish."

"The Lord's my shepherd! Wad ye even (compare) my hoose to Jock Thamson's or Jeemie Deuk's, baith i' this perris?"

"My good woman,—"

"Naither better nor waur nor my neepers," interrupted Mistress Croale, forgetting what she had just implied: "a body maun live."

"There are limits even to that most generally accepted of all principles," returned Mr. Sclater; "and I give you fair warning that I mean to do what I can to shut up all such houses as yours in my parish. I tell you of it, not from the least hope that you will anticipate me by closing, but merely that no one may say I did anything in an underhand fashion."

The calmness with which he uttered the threat alarmed Mistress Croale. He might rouse unmerited suspicion, and cause her much trouble by vexatious complaint, even to the peril of her license. She must take heed, and not irritate her enemy. Instantly, therefore, she changed her tone to one of expostulation.

"It's a sair peety, doobtless," she said, "'at there sud be sae mony drouthie thrapples i' the kingdom, sir; but drouth maun

drink, an' ye ken, sir, gien it war hauden frae them, they wad but see deils an' cut their throts."

"They're like to see deils ony gait er' lang," retorted the minister, relapsing into the vernacular for a moment.

"Ow, deed maybe, sir! but e'en the deils themsels war justifeed i' their objection to bein' committed to their ain company afore their time."

Mr. Sclater could not help smiling at the woman's readiness, and that was a point gained by her. An acquaintance with Scripture goes far with a Scotch ecclesiastic. Besides, the man had a redeeming sense of humour, though he did not know how to prize it, not believing it a gift of God.

"It's true, my woman," he answered. "Ay! it said something for them, deils 'at they war, 'at they preferred the swine. But even the swine cudna bide them!"

Encouraged by the condescension of the remark, but disinclined to follow the path of reflection it indicated, Mistress Croale ventured a little farther upon her own.

"Ye see, sir," she said, "as lang's there's whusky, it wull tak the throt-ro'd. It's the naitral w'y o' 't, ye see, to rin doon, an' it's no mainner o' use gangin' again natur. Sae, allooin' the thing maun be, ye'll hae till alloo likewise, an' it's a trouth I'm tellin' ye, sir, 'at it's o' nae sma' consequence to the toon 'at the drucken craturs sud fill themsels wi' dacency—an' that's what I see till. Gang na to the magistrate, sir; but as sune's ye hae gotten testimony—guid testimony though, sir—'at there's been disorder or immorawlity

i' my hoose, come ye to me, an' I'll gie ye my han' to paper on't this meenute, 'at I'll gie up my chop, an' lea' yer perris—an' may ye sune get a better i' my place. Sir, I'm like a mither to the puir bodies! An' gin ye drive them to Jock Thamson's, or Jeemie Deuk's, it'll be just like—savin' the word, I dinna inten' 't for sweirin', guid kens!—I say it'll just be dammin' them afore their time, like the puir deils. Hech! but it'll come sune eneuch, an' they're muckle to be peetied!"

"And when those victims of your vile ministrations," said the clergyman, again mounting his wooden horse, and setting it rocking, "find themselves where there will be no whisky to refresh them, where do you think you will be, Mistress Croale?"

"Whaur the Lord wulls," answered the woman. "Whaur that may be, I confess I'm whiles laith to think. Only gien I was you, Maister Sclater, I wad think twise afore I made ill waur."

"But hear me, Mistress Croale: it's not your besotted customers only I have to care for. Your soul is as precious in my sight as any of which I shall have to render an account."

"As Mistress Bonniman's, for enstance?" suggested Mrs. Croale, interrogatively, and with just the least trace of pawkiness in the tone.

The city, large as it was, was yet not large enough to prevent a portion of the private affairs of individuals from coming to be treated as public property, and Mrs. Bonniman was a handsome and rich young widow, the rumour of whose acceptableness to Mr. Sclater had reached Mistress Croale's ear before ever she had

seen the minister himself. An unmistakable shadow of confusion crossed his countenance; whereupon with consideration both for herself and him, the woman made haste to go on, as if she had but chosen her instance at merest random.

"Na, na, sir! what my sowl may be in the eyes o' my Maker, I hae ill tellin'," she said, "but dinna ye threip upo' me 'at it's o' the same vailue i' your eyes as the sowl o' sic a fine bonny, winsome leddy as yon. In trouth," she added, and shook her head mournfully, "I haena had sae mony preevileeges; an' maybe it'll be seen till, an' me passed ower a wheen easier nor some fowk."

"I wouldn't have you build too much upon that, Mistress Croale," said Mr. Sclater, glad to follow the talk down another turning, but considerably more afraid of rousing the woman than he had been before.

The remark drove her behind the categorical stockade of her religious merits.

"I pey my w'y," she said, with modest firmness. "I put my penny, and whiles my saxpence, intil the plate at the door when I gang to the kirk—an' I was jist thinkin' I wad win there the morn's nicht at farest, whan I turnt an' saw ye stan'in there, sir; an' little I thoucht—but that's neither here nor there, I'm thinkin'. I tell as feow lees as I can; I never sweir, nor tak the name o' the Lord in vain, anger me 'at likes; I sell naething but the best whusky; I never hae but broth to my denner upo' the Lord's day, an' broth canna brak the Sawbath, simmerin' awa' upo' the bar o' the grate, an' haudin' no lass frae the kirk; I confess, gien ye wull

be speirin', 'at I dinna read my buik sae aften as maybe I sud; but, 'deed, sir, tho' I says't 'at sud haud my tongue, ye hae waur folk i' yer perris nor Benjie Croale's widow; an' gien ye wunna hae a drap to weet yer ain whustle for the holy wark ye hae afore ye the morn's mornin', I maun gang an' mak my bed, for the lass is laid up wi' a bealt thoom, an' I maunna lat a' thing gang to dirt an' green bree; though I'm sure it's rale kin' o' ye to come to luik efter me, an' that's mair nor Maister Rennie, honest gentleman, ever did me the fawvour o', a' the time he ministered the perris. I haena an ill name wi' them 'at kens me, sir; that I can say wi' a clean conscience; an' ye may ken me weel gien ye wull. An' there's jist ae thing mair, sir: I gie ye my Bible-word, 'at never, gien I saw sign o' repentance or turnin' upo' ane o' them 'at pits their legs 'aneth my table—Wad ye luik intil the parlour, sir? No! —as I was sayin', never did I, sin' I keepit hoose, an' never wad I set mysel' to quench the smokin' flax; I wad hae no man's deith, sowl or body, lie at my door."

"Well, well, Mistress Croale," said the minister, somewhat dazed by the cataract he had brought upon his brain, and rather perplexed what to say in reply with any hope of reaching her, "I don't doubt a word of what you tell me; but you know works cannot save us; our best righteousness is but as filthy rags."

"It's weel I ken that, Mr. Sclater. An' I'm sure I'll be glaid to see ye, sir, ony time ye wad dee me the fawvour to luik in as ye're passin' by. It'll be none to yer shame, sir, for mine's an honest hoose."

"I'll do that, Mistress Croale," answered the minister, glad to escape. "But mind," he added, "I don't give up my point for all that; and I hope you will think over what I have been saying to you—and that seriously."

With these words he left the shop rather hurriedly, in evident dread of a reply.

Mistress Croale turned to the shelves behind her, took again the bottle she had replaced, poured out a large half-glass of whisky, and tossed it off. She had been compelled to think and talk of things unpleasant, and it had put her, as she said, a' in a trim'le. She was but one of the many who get the fuel of their life in at the wrong door, their comfort from the world-side of the universe. I cannot tell whether Mr. Sclater or she was the farther from the central heat. The woman had the advantage in this, that she had to expend all her force on mere self-justification, and had no energy left for vain-glory. It was with a sad sigh she set about the work of the house. Nor would it have comforted her much to assure her that hers was a better defence than any distiller in the country could make. Even the whisky itself gave her little relief; it seemed to scald both stomach and conscience, and she vowed never to take it again. But alas! this time is never the time for self-denial; it is always the next time. Abstinence is so much more pleasant to contemplate upon the other side of indulgence! Yet the struggles after betterment that many a drunkard has made in vain, would, had his aim been high enough, have saved his soul from death, and turned the charnel of his life into a temple.

Abject as he is, foiled and despised, such a one may not yet be half so contemptible as many a so-counted respectable member of society, who looks down on him from a height too lofty even for scorn. It is not the first and the last only, of whom many will have to change places; but those as well that come everywhere between.

CHAPTER IV.
THE PARLOUR

The day went on, and went out, its short autumnal brightness quenched in a chilly fog. All along the Widdiehill, the gas was alight in the low-browed dingy shops. To the well-to-do citizen hastening home to the topmost business of the day, his dinner, these looked the abodes of unlovely poverty and mean struggle. Even to those behind their counters, in their back parlours, and in their rooms above, everything about them looked common, to most of them, save the owners, wearisome. But to yon pale-faced student, gliding in the glow of his red gown, through the grey mist back to his lodging, and peeping in at every open door as he passes, they are so full of mystery, that gladly would he yield all he has gathered from books, for one genuine glance of insight into the vital movement of the hearts and households of which those open shops are the sole outward and visible signs. Each house is to him a nest of human birds, over which brood the eternal wings of love and purpose. Only such different birds are hatched from the same nest! And what a nest was then the city itself!—with its university, its schools, its churches, its hospitals, its missions; its homes, its lodging-houses, its hotels, its drinking shops, its houses viler still; its factories, its ships, its great steamers; and the same humanity busy in all!—here the

sickly lady walking in the panoply of love unharmed through the horrors of vicious suffering; there the strong mother cursing her own child along half a street with an intensity and vileness of execration unheard elsewhere! The will of the brooding spirit must be a grand one, indeed, to enclose so much of what cannot be its will, and turn all to its purpose of eternal good! Our knowledge of humanity, how much more our knowledge of the Father of it, is moving as yet but in the first elements.

In his shed under the stair it had been dark for some time —too dark for work, that is, and George Galbraith had lighted a candle: he never felt at liberty to leave off so long as a man was recognizable in the street by daylight. But now at last, with a sigh of relief, he rose. The hour of his redemption was come, the moment of it at hand. Outwardly calm, he was within eager as a lover to reach Lucky Croale's back parlour. His hand trembled with expectation as he laid from it the awl, took from between his knees the great boot on the toe of which he had been stitching a patch, lifted the yoke of his leather apron over his head, and threw it aside. With one hasty glance around, as if he feared some enemy lurking near to prevent his escape, he caught up a hat which looked as if it had been brushed with grease, pulled it on his head with both hands, stepped out quickly, closed the door behind him, turned the key, left it in the lock, and made straight for his earthly paradise—but with chastened step. All Mistress Croale's customers made a point of looking decent in the street —strove, in their very consciousness, to carry the expression of

being on their way to their tea, not their toddy—or if their toddy, then not that they desired it, but merely that it was their custom always of an afternoon: man had no choice—he must fill space, he must occupy himself; and if so, why not Mistress Croale's the place, and the consumption of whisky the occupation? But alas for their would-be seeming indifference! Everybody in the lane, almost in the Widdiehill, knew every one of them, and knew him for what he was; knew that every drop of toddy he drank was to him as to a miser his counted sovereign; knew that, as the hart for the water-brooks, so thirsted his soul ever after another tumbler; that he made haste to swallow the last drops of the present, that he might behold the plenitude of the next steaming before him; that, like the miser, he always understated the amount of the treasure he had secured, because the less he acknowledged, the more he thought he could claim.

George was a tall man, of good figure, loosened and bowed. His face was well favoured, but not a little wronged by the beard and dirt of a week, through which it gloomed haggard and white. Beneath his projecting black brows, his eyes gleamed doubtful, as a wood-fire where white ash dims the glow. He looked neither to right nor left, but walked on with moveless dull gaze, noting nothing.

"Yon's his ain warst enemy," said the kindly grocer-wife, as he passed her door.

"Ay," responded her customer, who kept a shop near by for old furniture, or anything that had been already once possessed

—"ay, I daursay. But eh! to see that puir negleckit bairn o' his rin scoorin' aboot the toon yon gait—wi' little o' a jacket but the collar, an' naething o' the breeks but the doup—eh, wuman! it maks a mither's hert sair to luik upo' 't. It's a providence 'at his mither's weel awa' an' canna see't; it wad gar her turn in her grave."

George was the first arrival at Mistress Croale's that night. He opened the door of the shop like a thief, and glided softly into the dim parlour, where the candles were not yet lit. There was light enough, however, from the busy little fire in the grate to show the clean sanded floor which it crossed with flickering shadows, the coloured prints and cases of stuffed birds on the walls, the full-rigged barque suspended from the centre of the ceiling, and, chief of all shows of heaven or earth, the black bottle on the table, with the tumblers, each holding its ladle, and its wine glass turned bottom upwards. Nor must I omit a part without which the rest could not have been a whole—the kettle of water that sat on the hob, softly crooning. Compared with the place where George had been at work all day, this was indeed an earthly paradise. Nor was the presence and appearance of Mistress Croale an insignificant element in the paradisial character of the place. She was now in a clean white cap with blue ribbons. Her hair was neatly divided, and drawn back from her forehead. Every trace of dirt and untidiness had disappeared from her person, which was one of importance both in size and in bearing. She wore a gown of some dark stuff with bright flowers on it, and a black silk apron.

Her face was composed, almost to sadness, and throughout the evening, during which she waited in person upon her customers, she comported herself with such dignity, that her slow step and stately carriage seemed rather to belong to the assistant at some religious ceremony than to one who ministered at the orgies of a few drunken tradespeople.

She was seated on the horsehair sofa in the fire-twilight, waiting for customers, when the face of Galbraith came peering round the door-cheek.

"Come awa' ben," she said, hospitably, and rose. But as she did so, she added with a little change of tone, "But I'm thinkin' ye maun hae forgotten, Sir George. This is Setterday nicht, ye ken; an' gien it war to be Sunday mornin' afore ye wan to yer bed, it wadna be the first time, an' ye michtna be up ear eneuch to get yersel shaved afore kirk time."

She knew as well as George himself that never by any chance did he go to church; but it was her custom, as I fancy it is that of some other bulwarks of society and pillars of the church, "for the sake of example," I presume, to make not unfrequent allusion to certain observances, moral, religious, or sanatory as if they were laws that everybody kept.

Galbraith lifted his hand, black, and embossed with cobbler's wax, and rubbed it thoughtfully over his chin: he accepted the fiction offered him; it was but the well-known prologue to a hebdomadal passage between them. What if he did not intend going to church the next day? Was that any reason why he should

not look a little tidier when his hard week's-work was over, and his nightly habit was turned into the comparatively harmless indulgence of a Saturday, in sure hope of the day of rest behind.

"Troth, I didna min' 'at it was Setterday," he answered. "I wuss I had pitten on a clean sark, an' washen my face. But I s' jist gang ower to the barber's an' get a scrape, an' maybe some o' them 'ill be here or I come back."

Mistress Croale knew perfectly that there was no clean shirt in George's garret. She knew also that the shirt he then wore, which probably, in consideration of her maid's festered hand, she would wash for him herself, was one of her late husband's which she had given him. But George's speech was one of those forms of sound words held fast by all who frequented Mistress Croale's parlour, and by herself estimated at more than their worth.

The woman had a genuine regard for Galbraith. Neither the character nor fate of one of the rest gave her a moment's trouble; but in her secret mind she deplored that George should drink so inordinately, and so utterly neglect his child as to let him spend his life in the streets. She comforted herself, however, with the reflection, that seeing he would drink, he drank with no bad companions—drank at all events where what natural wickedness might be in them, was suppressed by the sternness of her rule. Were he to leave her fold—for a fold in very truth, and not a sty, it appeared to her—and wander away to Jock Thamson's or Jeemie Deuk's, he would be drawn into loud and indecorous talk, probably into quarrel and uproar.

In a few minutes George returned, an odd contrast visible between the upper and lower halves of his face. Hearing his approach she met him at the door.

"Noo, Sir George," she said, "jist gang up to my room an' hae a wash, an' pit on the sark ye'll see lyin' upo' the bed; syne come doon an' hae yer tum'ler comfortable."

George's whole soul was bent upon his drink, but he obeyed as if she had been twice his mother. By the time he had finished his toilet, the usual company was assembled, and he appeared amongst them in all the respectability of a clean shirt and what purity besides the general adhesiveness of his trade-material would yield to a single ablution long delayed. They welcomed him all, with nod, or grin, or merry word, in individual fashion, as each sat measuring out his whisky, or pounding at the slow-dissolving sugar, or tasting the mixture with critical soul seated between tongue and palate.

The conversation was for some time very dull, with a strong tendency to the censorious. For in their circle, not only were the claims of respectability silently admitted, but the conduct of this and that man of their acquaintance, or of public note, was pronounced upon with understood reference to those claims —now with smile of incredulity or pity, now with headshake regretful or condemnatory—and this all the time that each was doing his best to reduce himself to a condition in which the word conduct could no longer have meaning in reference to him.

All of them, as did their hostess, addressed Galbraith as Sir

George, and he accepted the title with a certain unassuming dignity. For, if it was not universally known in the city, it was known to the best lawyers in it, that he was a baronet by direct derivation from the hand of King James the Sixth.

The fire burned cheerfully, and the kettle making many journeys between it and the table, things gradually grew more lively. Stories were told, often without any point, but not therefore without effect; reminiscences, sorely pulpy and broken at the edges, were offered and accepted with a laughter in which sober ears might have detected a strangely alien sound; and adventures were related in which truth was no necessary element to reception. In the case of the postman, for instance, who had been dismissed for losing a bag of letters the week before, not one of those present believed a word he said; yet as he happened to be endowed with a small stock of genuine humour, his stories were regarded with much the same favour as if they had been authentic. But the revival scarcely reached Sir George. He said little or nothing, but, between his slow gulps of toddy, sat looking vacantly into his glass. It is true he smiled absently now and then when the others laughed, but that was only for manners. Doubtless he was seeing somewhere the saddest of all visions—the things that might have been. The wretched craving of the lower organs stilled, and something spared for his brain, I believe the chief joy his drink gave him lay in the power once more to feel himself a gentleman. The washed hands, the shaven face, the clean shirt, had something to do with it, no doubt, but the

necromantic whisky had far more.

What faded ghosts of ancestral dignity and worth and story the evil potion called up in the mind of Sir George!—who himself hung ready to fall, the last, or all but the last, mildewed fruit of the tree of Galbraith! Ah! if this one and that of his ancestors had but lived to his conscience, and with some thought of those that were to come after him, he would not have transmitted to poor Sir George, in horrible addition to moral weakness, that physical proclivity which had now grown to such a hideous craving. To the miserable wretch himself it seemed that he could no more keep from drinking whisky than he could from breathing air.

CHAPTER V.
GIBBIE'S CALLING

I am not sure that his father's neglect was not on the whole better for Gibbie than would have been the kindness of such a father persistently embodying itself. But the picture of Sir George, by the help of whisky and the mild hatching oven of Mistress Croale's parlour, softly breaking from the shell of the cobbler, and floating a mild gentleman in the air of his lukewarm imagination, and poor wee Gibbie trotting outside in the frosty dark of the autumn night, through which the moon keeps staring down, vague and disconsolate, is hardly therefore the less pathetic. Under the window of the parlour where the light of revel shone radiant through a red curtain, he would stand listening for a moment, then, darting off a few yards suddenly and swiftly like a scared bird, fall at once into his own steady trot—up the lane and down, till he reached the window again, where again he would stand and listen. Whether he made this departure and return twenty or a hundred times in a night, he nor any one else could have told. Sometimes he would for a change extend his trot along the Widdiehill, sometimes along the parallel Vennel, but never far from Jink Lane and its glowing window. Never moth haunted lamp so persistently. Ever as he ran, up this pavement and down that, on the soft-sounding soles of his bare

feet, the smile on the boy's face grew more and more sleepy, but still he smiled and still he trotted, still paused at the window, and still started afresh.

He was not so much to be pitied as my reader may think. Never in his life had he yet pitied himself. The thought of hardship or wrong had not occurred to him. It would have been difficult—impossible, I believe—to get the idea into his head that existence bore to him any other shape than it ought. Things were with him as they had always been, and whence was he to take a fresh start, and question what had been from the beginning? Had any authority interfered, with a decree that Gibbie should no more scour the midnight streets, no more pass and repass that far-shining splendour of red, then indeed would bitter, though inarticulate, complaint have burst from his bosom. But there was no evil power to issue such a command, and Gibbie's peace was not invaded.

It was now late, and those streets were empty; neither carriage nor cart, wheelbarrow nor truck, went any more bumping and clattering over their stones. They were well lighted with gas, but most of the bordering houses were dark. Now and then a single foot-farer passed with loud, hollow-sounding boots along the pavement; or two girls would come laughing along, their merriment echoing rude in the wide stillness. A cold wind, a small, forsaken, solitary wind, moist with a thin fog, seemed, as well as wee Gibbie, to be roaming the night, for it met him at various corners, and from all directions. But it had nothing to do,

and nowhere to go, and there it was not like Gibbie, the business of whose life was even now upon him, the mightiest hope of whose conscious being was now awake.

All he expected, or ever desired to discover, by listening at the window, was simply whether there were yet signs of the company's breaking up; and his conclusions on that point were never mistaken: how he arrived at them it would be hard to say. Seldom had he there heard the voice of his father, still seldomer anything beyond its tone. This night, however, as the time drew near when they must go, lest the Sabbath should be broken in Mistress Croale's decent house, and Gibbie stood once more on tiptoe, with his head just on the level of the windowsill, he heard his father utter two words: "Up Daurside" came to him through the window, in the voice he loved, plain and distinct. The words conveyed to him nothing at all; the mere hearing of them made them memorable. For the time, however, he forgot them, for, by indications best known to himself, he perceived that the company was on the point of separating, and from that moment did not take his eyes off the door until he heard the first sounds of its opening. As, however, it was always hard for Gibbie to stand still, and especially hard on a midnight so cold that his feet threatened to grow indistinguishable from the slabs of the pavement, he was driven, in order not to lose sight of it, to practise the art, already cultivated by him to a crab-like perfection, of running first backwards, then forwards with scarcely superior speed. But it was not long ere the much expected sound of Mistress Croale's

voice heralded the hour for patience to blossom into possession. The voice was neither loud nor harsh, but clear and firm; the noise that followed was both loud and strident. Voices had a part in it, but the movement of chairs and feet and the sudden contact of different portions of the body with walls and tables, had a larger. The guests were obeying the voice of their hostess all in one like a flock of sheep, but it was poor shepherd-work to turn them out of the fold at midnight. Gibbie bounded up and stood still as a statue at the very door-cheek, until he heard Mistress Croale's hand upon the lock, when he bolted, trembling with eagerness, into the entry of a court a few houses nearer to the Widdiehill.

One after one the pitiable company issued from its paradise, and each stumbled away, too far gone for leave-taking. Most of them passed Gibbie where he stood, but he took no heed; his father was always the last—and the least capable. But, often as he left her door, never did it close behind him until with her own eyes Mistress Croale had seen Gibbie dart like an imp out of the court—to take him in charge, and, all the weary way home, hover, not very like a guardian angel, but not the less one in truth, around the unstable equilibrium of his father's tall and swaying form. And thereupon commenced a series of marvellous gymnastics on the part of wee Gibbie. Imagine a small boy with a gigantic top, which, six times his own size, he keeps erect on its peg, not by whipping it round, but by running round it himself, unfailingly applying, at the very spot and at the very moment,

the precise measure of impact necessary to counterbalance its perpetual tendency to fall in one direction or another, so that the two have all the air of a single invention—such an invention as one might meet with in an ancient clock, contrived when men had time to mingle play with earnest—and you will have in your mind's eye a real likeness of Sir George attended, any midnight in the week, by his son Gilbert. Home the big one staggered, reeled, gyrated, and tumbled; round and round him went the little one, now behind, now before, now on this side, now on that, his feet never more than touching the ground but dancing about like those of a prize-fighter, his little arms up and his hands well forward, like flying buttresses. And such indeed they were—buttresses which flew and flew all about a universally leaning tower. They propped it here, they propped it there; with wonderful judgment and skill and graduation of force they applied themselves, and with perfect success. Not once, for the last year and a half, during which time wee Gibbie had been the nightly guide of Sir George's homeward steps, had the self-disabled mass fallen prostrate in the gutter, there to snore out the night.

The first special difficulty, that of turning the corner of Jink Lane and the Widdiehill, successfully overcome, the twain went reeling and revolving along the street, much like a whirlwind that had half forgotten the laws of gyration, until at length it spun into the court, and up to the foot of the outside stair over the baronet's workshop. Then commenced the real struggle of the evening for Gibbie—and for his father too, though the latter was

aware of it only in the momentary and evanescent flashes of such enlightenment as made him just capable of yielding to the pushes and pulls of the former. All up the outside and the two inside stairs, his waking and sleeping were as the alternate tictac of a pendulum; but Gibbie stuck to his business like a man, and his resolution and perseverance were at length, as always, crowned with victory.

The house in which lords and ladies had often reposed was now filled with very humble folk, who were all asleep when Gibbie and his father entered; but the noise they made in ascending caused no great disturbance of their rest; for, if any of them were roused for a moment, it was but to recognize at once the cause of the tumult, and with the remark, "It's only wee Gibbie luggin' hame Sir George," to turn on the other side and fall asleep again.

Arrived at last at the garret door, which stood wide open, Gibbie had small need of light in the nearly pitch darkness of the place, for there was positively nothing to stumble over or against between the door and the ancient four-post bed, which was all of his father's house that remained to Sir George. With heavy shuffling feet the drunkard lumbered laboriously bedward; and the bare posts and crazy frame groaned and creaked as he fell upon the oat-chaff that lay waiting him in place of the vanished luxury of feathers. Wee Gibbie flew at his legs, nor rested until, the one after the other, he had got them on the bed; if then they were not very comfortably deposited, he knew that, in his first

turn, their owner would get them all right.

And now rose the culmen of Gibbie's day! its cycle, rounded through regions of banishment, returned to its nodus of bliss. In triumph he spread over his sleeping father his dead mother's old plaid of Gordon tartan, all the bedding they had, and without a moment's further delay—no shoes even to put off—crept under it, and nestled close upon the bosom of his unconscious parent. A victory more! another day ended with success! his father safe, and all his own! the canopy of the darkness and the plaid over them, as if they were the one only two in the universe! his father unable to leave him—his for whole dark hours to come! It was Gibbie's paradise now! His heaven was his father's bosom, to which he clung as no infant yet ever clung to his mother's. He never thought to pity himself that the embrace was all on his side, that no answering pressure came back from the prostrate form. He never said to himself, "My father is a drunkard, but I must make the best of it; he is all I have!" He clung to his one possession—only clung: this was his father—all in all to him. What must be the bliss of such a heart—of any heart, when it comes to know that there is a father of fathers, yea, a father of fatherhood! a father who never slumbers nor sleeps, but holds all the sleeping in his ever waking bosom—a bosom whose wakefulness is the sole fountain of their slumber!

The conscious bliss of the child was of short duration, for in a few minutes he was fast asleep; but for the gain of those few minutes only, the day had been well spent.

CHAPTER VI.
A SUNDAY AT HOME

Such were the events of every night, and such had they been since Gibbie first assumed this office of guardian—a time so long in proportion to his life that it seemed to him as one of the laws of existence that fathers got drunk and Gibbies took care of them. But Saturday night was always one of special bliss; for then the joy to come spread its arms beneath and around the present delight: all Sunday his father would be his. On that happiest day of all the week, he never set his foot out of doors, except to run twice to Mistress Croale's, once to fetch the dinner which she supplied from her own table, and for which Sir George regularly paid in advance on Saturday before commencing his potations.

But indeed the streets were not attractive to the child on Sundays: there were no shops open, and the people in their Sunday clothes, many of them with their faces studiously settled into masks intended to express righteousness, were far less interesting, because less alive, than the same people in their work-day attire, in their shops, or seated at their stalls, or driving their carts, and looking thoroughly human. As to going to church himself, such an idea had never entered his head. He had not once for a moment imagined that anybody would like him to go to church, that such as he ever went to church, that church was

at all a place to which Gibbies with fathers to look after should have any desire to go. As to what church going meant, he had not the vaguest idea; it had not even waked the glimmer of a question in his mind. All he knew was that people went to church on Sundays. It was another of the laws of existence, the reason of which he knew no more than why his father went every night to Jink Lane and got drunk. George, however, although he had taught his son nothing, was not without religion, and had notions of duty in respect of the Sabbath. Not even with the prize of whisky in view, would he have consented to earn a sovereign on that day by the lightest of work.

Gibbie was awake some time before his father, and lay revelling in love's bliss of proximity. At length Sir George, the merest bubble of nature, awoke, and pushed him from him.

The child got up at once, but only to stand by the bed-side. He said no word, did not even think an impatient thought, yet his father seemed to feel that he was waiting for him. After two or three huge yawns, he spread out his arms, but, unable to stretch himself, yawned again, rolled himself off the bed, and crept feebly across the room to an empty chest that stood under the skylight. There he seated himself, and for half an hour sat motionless, a perfect type of dilapidation, moral and physical, while a little way off stood Gibbie, looking on, like one awaiting a resurrection. At length he seemed to come to himself —the expected sign of which was that he reached down his hand towards the meeting of roof and floor, and took up a tiny last

with a half-made boot upon it. At sight of it in his father's hands, Gibbie clapped his with delight—an old delight, renewed every Sunday since he could remember. That boot was for him! and this being the second, the pair would be finished before night! By slow degrees of revival, with many pauses between, George got to work. He wanted no breakfast, and made no inquiry of Gibbie whether he had had any. But what cared Gibbie about breakfast! With his father all to himself, and that father working away at a new boot for him—for him who had never had a pair of any sort upon his feet since the woollen ones he wore in his mother's lap, breakfast or no breakfast was much the same to him. It could never have occurred to him that it was his father's part to provide him with breakfast. If he was to have none, it was Sunday that was to blame: there was no use in going to look for any when the shops were all shut, and everybody either at church, or closed in domestic penetralia, or out for a walk. More than contented, therefore, while busily his father wedded welt and sole with stitches infrangible, Gibbie sat on the floor, preparing waxed ends, carefully sticking in the hog's bristle, and rolling the combination, with quite professional aptitude, between the flat of his hand and what of trouser-leg he had left, gazing eagerly between at the advancing masterpiece. Occasionally the triumph of expectation would exceed his control, when he would spring from the floor, and caper and strut about like a pigeon—soft as a shadow, for he knew his father could not bear noise in the morning—or behind his back execute a pantomimic dumb show

of delight, in which he seemed with difficulty to restrain himself from jumping upon him, and hugging him in his ecstasy. Oh, best of parents! working thus even on a Sunday for his Gibbie, when everybody else was at church enjoying himself! But Gibbie never dared hug his father except when he was drunk—why, he could hardly have told. Relieved by his dumb show, he would return, quite as an aged grimalkin, and again deposit himself on the floor near his father where he could see his busy hands.

All this time Sir George never spoke a word. Incredible as it may seem, however, he was continually, off and on, trying his hardest to think of some Sunday lesson to give his child. Many of those that knew the boy, regarded him as a sort of idiot, drawing the conclusion from Gibbie's practical honesty and his too evident love for his kind: it was incredible that a child should be poor, unselfish, loving, and not deficient in intellect! His father knew him better, yet he often quieted his conscience in regard to his education, with the reflection that not much could be done for him. Still, every now and then he would think perhaps he ought to do something: who could tell but the child might be damned for not understanding the plan of salvation? and brooding over the matter this morning, as well as his headache would permit, he came to the resolution, as he had often done before, to buy a Shorter Catechism; the boy could not learn it, but he would keep reading it to him, and something might stick. Even now perhaps he could begin the course by recalling some of the questions and answers that had been the plague of his life every

Saturday at school. He set his recollection to work, therefore, in the lumber-room of his memory, and again and again sent it back to the task, but could find nothing belonging to the catechism except the first question with its answer, and a few incoherent fragments of others. Moreover, he found his mind so confused and incapable of continuous or concentrated effort, that he could not even keep "man's chief end" and the rosined end between his fingers from twisting up together in the most extraordinary manner. Yet if the child but "had the question," he might get some good of it. The hour might come when he would say, "My father taught me that!"—who could tell? And he knew he had the words correct, wherever he had dropped their meaning. For the sake of Gibbie's immortal part, therefore, he would repeat the answer to that first, most momentous of questions, over and over as he worked, in the hope of insinuating something—he could not say what—into the small mental pocket of the innocent. The first, therefore, and almost the only words which Gibbie heard from his father's lips that morning, were these, dozens of times repeated—"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." But so far was Gibbie from perceiving in them any meaning, that even with his father's pronunciation of chief end as chifenn, they roused in his mind no sense or suspicion of obscurity. The word stuck there, notwithstanding; but Gibbie was years a man before he found out what a chifenn was. Where was the great matter? How many who have learned their catechism and deplore the ignorance of others, make the least effort to place

their chief end even in the direction of that of their creation? Is it not the constant thwarting of their aims, the rendering of their desires futile, and their ends a mockery, that alone prevents them and their lives from proving an absolute failure? Sir George, with his inveterate, consuming thirst for whisky, was but the type of all who would gain their bliss after the scheme of their own fancies, instead of the scheme of their existence; who would build their house after their own childish wilfulness instead of the ground-plan of their being. How was Sir George to glorify the God whom he could honestly thank for nothing but whisky, the sole of his gifts that he prized? Over and over that day he repeated the words, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever," and all the time his imagination, his desire, his hope, were centred on the bottle, which with his very back he felt where it stood behind him, away on the floor at the head of his bed. Nevertheless when he had gone over them a score of times or so, and Gibbie had begun, by a merry look and nodding of his head, to manifest that he knew what was coming next, the father felt more content with himself than for years past; and when he was satisfied that Gibbie knew all the words, though, indeed, they were hardly more than sounds to him, he sent him, with a great sense of relief, to fetch the broth and beef and potatoes from Mistress Croale's.

Eating a real dinner in his father's house, though without a table to set it upon, Gibbie felt himself a most privileged person. The only thing that troubled him was that his father ate so little.

Not until the twilight began to show did Sir George really begin to revive, but the darker it grew without, the brighter his spirit burned. For, amongst not a few others, there was this strange remnant of righteousness in the man, that he never would taste drink before it was dark in winter, or in summer before the regular hour for ceasing work had arrived; and to this rule he kept, and that under far greater difficulties, on the Sunday as well. For Mistress Croale would not sell a drop of drink, not even on the sly, on the Sabbath-day: she would fain have some stake in the hidden kingdom; and George, who had not a Sunday stomach he could assume for the day any more than a Sunday coat, was thereby driven to provide his whisky and that day drink it at home; when, with the bottle so near him, and the sense that he had not to go out to find his relief, his resolution was indeed sorely tried; but he felt that to yield would be to cut his last cable and be swept on the lee-shore of utter ruin.

Breathless with eager interest, Gibbie watched his father's hands, and just as the darkness closed in, the boot was finished. His father rose, and Gibbie, glowing with delight, sprang upon the seat he had left, while his father knelt upon the floor to try upon the unaccustomed foot the result from which he had just drawn the last. Ah, pity! pity! But even Gibbie might by this time have learned to foresee it! three times already had the same thing happened: the boot would not go on the foot. The real cause of the failure it were useless to inquire. Sir George said that, Sunday being the only day he could give to the boots, before he could

finish them, Gibbie's feet had always outgrown the measure. But it may be Sir George was not so good a maker as cobbler. That he meant honestly by the boy I am sure, and not the less sure for the confession I am forced to make, that on each occasion when he thus failed to fit him, he sold the boots the next day at a fair price to a ready-made shop, and drank the proceeds. A stranger thing still was, that, although Gibbie had never yet worn boot or shoe, his father's conscience was greatly relieved by the knowledge that he spent his Sundays in making boots for him. Had he been an ordinary child, and given him trouble, he would possibly have hated him; as it was, he had a great though sadly inoperative affection for the boy, which was an endless good to them both.

After many bootless trials, bootless the feet must remain, and George, laying the failure down in despair, rose from his knees, and left Gibbie seated on the chest more like a king discrowned, than a beggar unshod. And like a king the little beggar bore his pain. He heaved one sigh, and a slow moisture gathered in his eyes, but it did not overflow. One minute only he sat and hugged his desolation—then, missing his father, jumped off the box to find him.

He sat on the edge of the bed, looking infinitely more disconsolate than Gibbie felt, his head and hands hanging down, a picture of utter dejection. Gibbie bounded to him, climbed on the bed, and nearly strangled him in the sharp embrace of his little arms. Sir George took him on his knees and kissed him, and the

tears rose in his dull eyes. He got up with him, carried him to the box, placed him on it once more, and fetched a piece of brown paper from under the bed. From this he tore carefully several slips, with which he then proceeded to take a most thoughtful measurement of the baffling foot. He was far more to be pitied than Gibbie, who would not have worn the boots an hour had they been the best fit in shoedom. The soles of his feet were very nearly equal in resistance to leather, and at least until the snow and hard frost came, he was better without boots.

But now the darkness had fallen, and his joy was at the door. But he was always too much ashamed to begin to drink before the child: he hated to uncork the bottle before him. What followed was in regular Sunday routine.

"Gang ower to Mistress Croale's, Gibbie," he said, "wi' my compliments."

Away ran Gibbie, nothing loath, and at his knock was admitted. Mistress Croale sat in the parlour, taking her tea, and expecting him. She was always kind to the child. She could not help feeling that no small part of what ought to be spent on him came to her; and on Sundays, therefore, partly for his sake, partly for her own, she always gave him his tea—nominally tea, really blue city-milk—with as much dry bread as he could eat, and a bit of buttered toast from her plate to finish off with. As he ate, he stood at the other side of the table; he looked so miserable in her eyes that, even before her servant, she was ashamed to have him sit with her; but Gibbie was quite content, never thought of

sitting, and ate in gladness, every now and then looking up with loving, grateful eyes, which must have gone right to the woman's heart, had it not been for a vague sense she had of being all the time his enemy—and that although she spent much time in persuading herself that she did her best both for his father and him.

When he returned, greatly refreshed, and the boots all but forgotten, he found his father, as he knew he would, already started on the business of the evening. He had drawn the chest, the only seat in the room, to the side of the bed, against which he leaned his back. A penny candle was burning in a stone blacking bottle on the chimney piece, and on the floor beside the chest stood the bottle of whisky, a jug of water, a stoneware mug, and a wineglass.

There was no fire and no kettle, whence his drinking was sad, as became the Scotch Sabbath in distinction from the Jewish. There, however, was the drink, and thereby his soul could live —yea, expand her mouldy wings! Gibbie was far from shocked; it was all right, all in the order of things, and he went up to his father with radiant countenance. Sir George put forth his hands and took him between his knees. An evil wind now swelled his sails, but the cargo of the crazy human hull was not therefore evil.

"Gibbie," he said, solemnly, "never ye drink a drap o' whusky. Never ye rax oot the han' to the boatle. Never ye drink anything but watter, caller watter, my man."

As he said the words, he stretched out his own hand to the

mug, lifted it to his lips, and swallowed a great gulp.

"Dinna do't, I tell ye, Gibbie," he repeated.

Gibbie shook his head with positive repudiation.

"That's richt, my man," responded his father with satisfaction. "Gien ever I see ye pree (taste) the boatle, I'll warstle frae my grave an' fleg ye oot o' the sma' wuts ye hae, my man."

Here followed another gulp from the mug.

The threat had conveyed nothing to Gibbie. Even had he understood, it would have carried anything but terror to his father-worshipping heart.

"Gibbie," resumed Sir George, after a brief pause, "div ye ken what fowk'll ca' ye whan I'm deid?"

Gibbie again shook his head—with expression this time of mere ignorance.

"They'll ca' ye Sir Gibbie Galbraith, my man," said his father, "an' richtly, for it'll be no nickname, though some may lauch 'cause yer father was a sutor, an' mair 'at, for a' that, ye haena a shee to yer fut yersel', puir fallow! Heedna ye what they say, Gibbie. Min' 'at ye're Sir Gibbie, an' hae the honour o' the faimily to haud up, my man—an' that ye can not dee an' drink. This cursit drink's been the ruin o' a' the Galbraiths as far back as I ken. 'Maist the only thing I can min' o' my gran'father—a big bonny man, wi' lang white hair—twise as big's me, Gibbie—is seein' him deid drunk i' the gutter o' the pump. He drank 'maist a' thing there was, Gibbie—lan's an' lordship, till there was hardly an accre left upo' haill Daurside to come to my father—'maist

naething but a wheen sma' hooses. He was a guid man, my father; but his father learnt him to drink afore he was 'maist oot o' 's coaties, an' gae him nae schuilin'; an' gien he red himsel' o' a' 'at was left, it was sma' won'er—only, ye see, Gibbie, what was to come o' me? I pit it till ye, Gibbie—what was to come o' me? —Gien a kin' neiper, 'at kent what it was to drink, an' sae had a fallow-feelin', hadna ta'en an' learnt me my trade, the Lord kens what wad hae come o' you an' me, Gibbie, my man!—Gang to yer bed, noo, an' lea' me to my ain thouchts; no' 'at they're aye the best o' company, laddie.—But whiles they're no that ill," he concluded, with a weak smile, as some reflex of himself not quite unsatisfactory gloomed faintly in the besmeared mirror of his uncertain consciousness.

Gibbie obeyed, and getting under the Gordon tartan, lay and looked out, like a weasel from its hole, at his father's back. For half an hour or so Sir George went on drinking. All at once he started to his feet, and turning towards the bed a white face distorted with agony, kneeled down on the box and groaned out:

"O God, the pains o' hell hae gotten haud upo' me. O Lord, I'm i' the grup o' Sawtan. The deevil o' drink has me by the hause. I doobt, O Lord, ye're gauin' to damn me dreidfu'. What guid that'll do ye, O Lord, I dinna ken, but I doobtna ye'll dee what's richt, only I wuss I hed never crossed ye i' yer wull. I kenna what I'm to dee, or what's to be deene wi' me, or whaur ony help's to come frae. I hae tried an' tried to maister the drink, but I was aye whumled. For ye see, Lord, kennin' a' thing as ye dee, 'at

until I hae a drap i' my skin, I canna even think; I canna min' the sangs I used to sing, or the prayers my mither learnt me sittin' upo' her lap. Till I hae swallowed a mou'fu' or twa, things luik sae awfu'-like 'at I'm fit to cut my thro't; an' syne ance I'm begun, there's nae mair thoucht o' endeevourin' to behaud (withhold) till I canna drink a drap mair. O God, what garred ye mak things 'at wad mak whusky, whan ye kenned it wad mak sic a beast o' me?"

He paused, stretched down his hand to the floor, lifted the mug, and drank a huge mouthful; then with a cough that sounded apologetic, set it down, and recommenced:

"O Lord, I doobt there's nae houp for me, for the verra river o' the watter o' life wadna be guid to me wantin' a drap frae the boatle intil 't. It's the w'y wi' a' hiz 'at drinks. It's no 'at we're drunkards, Lord—ow na! it's no that, Lord; it's only 'at we canna dee wantin' the drink. We're sair drinkers, I maun confess, but no jist drunkards, Lord. I'm no drunk the noo; I ken what I'm sayin', an' it's sair trowth, but I cudna hae prayt a word to yer lordship gien I hadna had a jooggy or twa first. O Lord, deliver me frae the pooer o' Sawtan.—O Lord! O Lord! I canna help mysel'. Dinna sen' me to the ill place. Ye loot the deils gang intil the swine, lat me tee."

With this frightful petition, his utterance began to grow indistinct. Then he fell forward upon the bed, groaning, and his voice died gradually away. Gibbie had listened to all he said, but the awe of hearing his father talk to one unseen, made his soul very still, and when he ceased he fell asleep.

Alas for the human soul inhabiting a drink-fouled brain! It is a human soul still, and wretched in the midst of all that whisky can do for it. From the pit of hell it cries out. So long as there is that which can sin, it is a man. And the prayer of misery carries its own justification, when the sober petitions of the self-righteous and the unkind are rejected. He who forgives not is not forgiven, and the prayer of the Pharisee is as the weary beating of the surf of hell, while the cry of a soul out of its fire sets the heart-strings of love trembling. There are sins which men must leave behind them, and sins which they must carry with them. Society scouts the drunkard because he is loathsome, and it matters nothing whether society be right or wrong, while it cherishes in its very bosom vices which are, to the God-born thing we call the soul, yet worse poisons. Drunkards and sinners, hard as it may be for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven, must yet be easier to save than the man whose position, reputation, money, engross his heart and his care, who seeks the praise of men and not the praise of God. When I am more of a Christian, I shall have learnt to be sorrier for the man whose end is money or social standing than for the drunkard. But now my heart, recoiling from the one, is sore for the other—for the agony, the helplessness, the degradation, the nightmare struggle, the wrongs and cruelties committed, the duties neglected, the sickening ruin of mind and heart. So often, too, the drunkard is originally a style of man immeasurably nobler than the money-maker! Compare a Coleridge, Samuel Taylor or Hartley, with—no; that man has not

yet passed to his account. God has in his universe furnaces for the refining of gold, as well as for the burning of chaff and tares and fruitless branches; and, however they may have offended, it is the elder brother who is the judge of all the younger ones.

Gibbie slept some time. When he woke, it was pitch dark, and he was not lying on his father's bosom, He felt about with his hands till he found his father's head. Then he got up and tried to rouse him, and failing to get him on to the bed. But in that too he was sadly unsuccessful: what with the darkness and the weight of him, the result of the boy's best endeavour was, that Sir George half slipped, half rolled down upon the box, and from that to the floor. Assured then of his own helplessness, wee Gibbie dragged the miserable bolster from the bed, and got it under his father's head; then covered him with the plaid, and creeping under it, laid himself on his father's bosom, where soon he slept again.

He woke very cold, and getting up, turned heels-over-head several times to warm himself, but quietly, for his father was still asleep. The room was no longer dark, for the moon was shining through the skylight. When he had got himself a little warmer, he turned to have a look at his father. The pale light shone full upon his face, and it was that, Gibbie thought, which made him look so strange. He darted to him, and stared aghast: he had never seen him look like that before, even when most drunk! He threw himself upon him: his face was dreadfully cold. He pulled and shook him in fear—he could not have told of what, but he would not wake. He was gone to see what God could do for him there,

for whom nothing more could be done here.

But Gibbie did not know anything about death, and went on trying to wake him. At last he observed that, although his mouth was wide open, the breath did not come from it. Thereupon his heart began to fail him. But when he lifted an eyelid, and saw what was under it, the house rang with the despairing shriek of the little orphan.

CHAPTER VII.
THE TOWN-SPARROW

"This, too, will pass," is a Persian word: I should like it better if it were "This, too, shall pass."

Gibbie's agony passed, for God is not the God of the dead but of the living. Through the immortal essence in him, life became again life, and he ran about the streets as before. Some may think that wee Sir Gibbie—as many now called him, some knowing the truth, and others in kindly mockery—would get on all the better for the loss of such a father; but it was not so. In his father he had lost his Paradise, and was now a creature expelled. He was not so much to be pitied as many a child dismissed by sudden decree from a home to a school; but the streets and the people and the shops, the horses and the dogs, even the penny-loaves though he was hungry, had lost half their precious delight, when his father was no longer in the accessible background, the heart of the blissful city. As to food and clothing, he did neither much better nor any worse than before: people were kind as usual, and kindness was to Gibbie the very milk of mother Nature. Whose the hand that proffered it, or what the form it took, he cared no more than a stray kitten cares whether the milk set down to it be in a blue saucer or a white. But he always made the right return. The first thing a kindness deserves is acceptance, the

next is transmission: Gibbie gave both, without thinking much about either. For he never had taken, and indeed never learned to take, a thought about what he should eat or what he should drink, or wherewithal he should be clothed—a fault rendering him, in the eyes of the economist of this world, utterly unworthy of a place in it. There is a world, however, and one pretty closely mixed up with this, though it never shows itself to one who has no place in it, the birds of whose air have neither storehouse nor barn, but are just such thoughtless cherubs—thoughtless for themselves, that is—as wee Sir Gibbie. It would be useless to attempt convincing the mere economist that this great city was a little better, a little happier, a little merrier, for the presence in it of the child, because he would not, even if convinced of the fact, recognize the gain; but I venture the assertion to him, that the conduct of not one of its inhabitants was the worse for the example of Gibbie's apparent idleness; and that not one of the poor women who now and then presented the small baronet with a penny, or a bit of bread, or a scrap of meat, or a pair of old trousers—shoes nobody gave him, and he neither desired nor needed any—ever felt the poorer for the gift, or complained that she should be so taxed.

Positively or negatively, then, everybody was good to him, and Gibbie felt it; but what could make up for the loss of his Paradise, the bosom of a father? Drunken father as he was, I know of nothing that can or ought to make up for such a loss, except that which can restore it—the bosom of the Father of fathers.

He roamed the streets, as all his life before, the whole of the day, and part of the night; he took what was given him, and picked up what he found. There were some who would gladly have brought him within the bounds of an ordered life; he soon drove them to despair, however, for the streets had been his nursery, and nothing could keep him out of them. But the sparrow and the rook are just as respectable in reality, though not in the eyes of the hen-wife, as the egg-laying fowl, or the dirt-gobbling duck; and, however Gibbie's habits might shock the ladies of Mr. Sclater's congregation who sought to civilize him, the boy was no more about mischief in the streets at midnight, than they were in their beds. They collected enough for his behoof to board him for a year with an old woman who kept a school, and they did get him to sleep one night in her house. But in the morning, when she would not let him run out, brought him into the school-room, her kitchen, and began to teach him to write, Gibbie failed to see the good of it. He must have space, change, adventure, air, or life was not worth the name to him. Above all he must see friendly faces, and that of the old dame was not such. But he desired to be friendly with her, and once, as she leaned over him, put up his hand—not a very clean one, I am bound to give her the advantage of my confessing—to stroke her cheek: she pushed him roughly away, rose in indignation upon her crutch, and lifted her cane to chastise him for the insult. A class of urchins, to Gibbie's eyes at least looking unhappy, were at the moment blundering through the twenty-third psalm.

Ever after, even when now Sir Gilbert more than understood the great song, the words, "thy rod and thy staff," like the spell of a necromancer would still call up the figure of the dame irate, in her horn spectacles and her black-ribboned cap, leaning with one arm on her crutch, and with the other uplifting what was with her no mere symbol of authority. Like a shell from a mortar, he departed from the house. She hobbled to the door after him, but his diminutive figure many yards away, his little bare legs misty with swiftness as he ran, was the last she ever saw of him, and her pupils had a bad time of it the rest of the day. He never even entered the street again in which she lived. Thus, after one night's brief interval of respectability, he was again a rover of the city, a flitting insect that lighted here and there, and spread wings of departure the moment a fresh desire awoke.

It would be difficult to say where he slept. In summer anywhere; in winter where he could find warmth. Like animals better clad than he, yet like him able to endure cold, he revelled in mere heat when he could come by it. Sometimes he stood at the back of a baker's oven, for he knew all the haunts of heat about the city; sometimes he buried himself in the sids (husks of oats) lying ready to feed the kiln of a meal-mill; sometimes he lay by the furnace of the steam-engine of the water-works. One man employed there, when his time was at night, always made a bed for Gibbie: he had lost his own only child, and this one of nobody's was a comfort to him.

Even those who looked upon wandering as wicked, only

scolded into the sweet upturned face, pouring gall into a cup of wine too full to receive a drop of it—and did not hand him over to the police. Useless verily that would have been, for the police would as soon have thought of taking up a town sparrow as Gibbie, and would only have laughed at the idea. They knew Gibbie's merits better than any of those good people imagined his faults. It requires either wisdom or large experience to know that a child is not necessarily wicked even if born and brought up in a far viler entourage than was Gibbie.

The merits the police recognized in him were mainly two—neither of small consequence in their eyes; the first, the negative, yet more important one, that of utter harmlessness; the second, and positive one—a passion and power for rendering help, taking notable shape chiefly in two ways, upon both of which I have already more than touched. The first was the peculiar faculty now pretty generally known—his great gift, some, his great luck, others called it—for finding things lost. It was no wonder the town crier had sought his acquaintance, and when secured, had cultivated it—neither a difficult task; for the boy, ever since he could remember, had been in the habit, as often as he saw the crier, or heard his tuck of drum in the distance, of joining him and following, until he had acquainted himself with all particulars concerning everything proclaimed as missing. The moment he had mastered the facts announced, he would dart away to search, and not unfrequently to return with the thing sought. But it was not by any means only things sought that he

found. He continued to come upon things of which he had no simulacrum in his phantasy. These, having no longer a father to carry them to, he now, their owners unknown, took to the crier, who always pretended to receive them with a suspicion which Gibbie understood as little as the other really felt, and at once advertised them by drum and cry. What became of them after that, Gibbie never knew. If they did not find their owners, neither did they find their way back to Gibbie; if their owners were found, the crier never communicated with him on the subject. Plainly he regarded Gibbie as the favoured jackal, whose privilege it was to hunt for the crier, the royal lion of the city forest. But he spoke kindly to him, as well he might, and now and then gave him a penny.

The second of the positive merits by which Gibbie found acceptance in the eyes of the police, was a yet more peculiar one, growing out of his love for his father, and his experience in the exercise of that love. It was, however, unintelligible to them, and so remained, except on the theory commonly adopted with regard to Gibbie, namely, that he wasna a' there. Not the less was it to them a satisfactory whim of his, seeing it mitigated their trouble as guardians of the nightly peace and safety. It was indeed the main cause of his being, like themselves, so much in the street at night: seldom did Gibbie seek his lair—I cannot call it couch—before the lengthening hours of the morning. If the finding of things was a gift, this other peculiarity was a passion—and a right human passion—absolutely possessing the child: it

was, to play the guardian angel to drunk folk. If such a distressed human craft hove in sight, he would instantly bear down upon and hover about him, until resolved as to his real condition. If he was in such distress as to require assistance, he never left him till he saw him safe within his own door. The police asserted that wee Sir Gibbie not only knew every drunkard in the city, and where he lived, but where he generally got drunk as well. That one was in no danger of taking the wrong turning, upon whom Gibbie was in attendance, to determine, by a shove on this side or that, the direction in which the hesitating, uncertain mass of stultified humanity was to go. He seemed a visible embodiment of that special providence which is said to watch over drunk people and children, only here a child was the guardian of the drunkard, and in this branch of his mission, was well known to all who, without qualifying themselves for coming under his cherubic cognizance, were in the habit of now and then returning home late. He was least known to those to whom he rendered most assistance. Rarely had he thanks for it, never halfpence, but not unfrequently blows and abuse. For the last he cared nothing; the former, owing to his great agility, seldom visited him with any directness. A certain reporter of humorous scandal, after his third tumbler, would occasionally give a graphic description of what, coming from a supper-party, he once saw about two o'clock in the morning. In the great street of the city, he overhauled a huge galleon, which proved, he declared, to be the provost himself, not exactly water-logged, and yet not very buoyant, but

carrying a good deal of sail. He might possibly have escaped very particular notice, he said, but for the assiduous attendance upon him of an absurd little cock-boat, in the person of wee Gibbie —the two reminding him right ludicrously of the story of the Spanish Armada. Round and round the bulky provost gyrated the tiny baronet, like a little hero of the ring, pitching into him, only with open-handed pushes, not with blows, now on this side and now on that—not after such fashion of sustentation as might have sufficed with a man of ordinary size, but throwing all his force now against the provost's bulging bows, now against his over-leaning quarter, encountering him now as he lurched, now as he heeled, until at length he landed him high, though certainly not dry, on the top of his own steps. The moment the butler opened the door, and the heavy hulk rolled into dock, Gibbie darted off as if he had been the wicked one tormenting the righteous, and in danger of being caught by a pair of holy tongs. Whether the tale was true or not, I do not know: with after-dinner humourists there is reason for caution. Gibbie was not offered the post of henchman to the provost, and rarely could have had the chance of claiming salvage for so distinguished a vessel, seeing he generally cruised in waters where such craft seldom sailed. Though almost nothing could now have induced him to go down Jink Lane, yet about the time the company at Mistress Croale's would be breaking up, he would on most nights be lying in wait a short distance down the Widdiehill, ready to minister to that one of his father's old comrades who might prove most in need of his

assistance; and if he showed him no gratitude, Gibbie had not been trained in a school where he was taught to expect or even to wish for any.

I could now give a whole chapter to the setting forth of the pleasures the summer brought him, city summer as it was, but I must content myself with saying that first of these, and not least, was the mere absence of the cold of the other seasons, bringing with it many privileges. He could lie down anywhere and sleep when he would; or spend, if he pleased, whole nights awake, in a churchyard, or on the deck of some vessel discharging her cargo at the quay, or running about the still, sleeping streets. Thus he got to know the shapes of some of the constellations, and not a few of the aspects of the heavens. But even then he never felt alone, for he gazed at the vista from the midst of a cityful of his fellows. Then there were the scents of the laylocks and the roses and the carnations and the sweet-peas, that came floating out from the gardens, contending sometimes with those of the grocers' and chemists' shops. Now and then too he came in for a small feed of strawberries, which were very plentiful in their season. Sitting then on a hospitable doorstep, with the feet and faces of friends passing him in both directions, and love embodied in the warmth of summer all about him, he would eat his strawberries, and inherit the earth.

CHAPTER VIII.
SAMBO

No one was so sorry for the death of Sir George, or had so many kind words to say in memory of him, as Mistress Croale. Neither was her sorrow only because she had lost so good a customer, or even because she had liked the man: I believe it was much enhanced by a vague doubt that after all she was to blame for his death. In vain she said to herself, and said truly, that it would have been far worse for him, and Gibbie too, had he gone elsewhere for his drink; she could not get the account settled with her conscience. She tried to relieve herself by being kinder than before to the boy; but she was greatly hindered in this by the fact that, after his father's death, she could not get him inside her door. That his father was not there—would not be there at night, made the place dreadful to him. This addition to the trouble of mind she already had on account of the nature of her business, was the cause, I believe, why, after Sir George's death, she went down the hill with accelerated speed. She sipped more frequently from her own bottle, soon came to "tasting with" her customers, and after that her descent was rapid. She no longer refused drink to women, though for a time she always gave it under protest; she winked at card-playing; she grew generally more lax in her administration; and by degrees a mist of evil

fame began to gather about her house. Thereupon her enemy, as she considered him, the Rev. Clement Sclater, felt himself justified in moving more energetically for the withdrawal of her license, which, with the support of outraged neighbours, he found no difficulty in effecting. She therefore flitted to another parish, and opened a worse house in a worse region of the city—on the river-bank, namely, some little distance above the quay, not too far to be within easy range of sailors, and the people employed about the vessels loading or discharging cargo. It pretended to be only a lodging-house, and had no license for the sale of strong drink, but nevertheless, one way and another, a great deal was drunk in the house, and, as always card-playing, and sometimes worse things were going on, getting more vigorous ever as the daylight waned, frequent quarrels and occasional bloodshed was the consequence. For some time, however, nothing very serious brought the place immediately within the conscious ken of the magistrates.

In the second winter after his father's death, Gibbie, wandering everywhere about the city, encountered Lucky Croale in the neighbourhood of her new abode; down there she was Mistress no longer, but, with a familiarity scarcely removed from contempt, was both mentioned and addressed as Lucky Croale. The repugnance which had hitherto kept Gibbie from her having been altogether to her place and not to herself, he at once accompanied her home, and after that went often to the house. He was considerably surprised when first he heard

words from her mouth for using which she had formerly been in the habit of severely reproving her guests; but he always took things as he found them, and when ere long he had to hear such occasionally addressed to himself, when she happened to be more out of temper than usual, he never therefore questioned her friendship. What more than anything else attracted him to her house, however, was the jolly manners and open-hearted kindness of most of the sailors who frequented it, with almost all of whom he was a favourite; and it soon came about that, when his ministrations to the incapable were over, he would spend the rest of the night more frequently there than anywhere else; until at last he gave up, in a great measure, his guardianship of the drunk in the streets for that of those who were certainly in much more danger of mishap at Lucky Croale's. Scarcely a night passed when he was not present at one or more of the quarrels of which the place was a hot-bed; and as he never by any chance took a part, or favoured one side more than another, but confined himself to an impartial distribution of such peace-making blandishments as the ever-springing fountain of his affection took instinctive shape in, the wee baronet came to be regarded, by the better sort of the rough fellows, almost as the very identical sweet little cherub, sitting perched up aloft, whose department in the saving business of the universe it was, to take care of the life of poor Jack. I do not say that he was always successful in his endeavours at atonement, but beyond a doubt Lucky Croale's house was a good deal less of a hell through the

haunting presence of the child. He was not shocked by the things he saw, even when he liked them least. He regarded the doing of them much as he had looked upon his father's drunkenness—as a pitiful necessity that overtook men—one from which there was no escape, and which caused a great need for Gibbies. Evil language and coarse behaviour alike passed over him, without leaving the smallest stain upon heart or conscience, desire or will. No one could doubt it who considered the clarity of his face and eyes, in which the occasional but not frequent expression of keenness and promptitude scarcely even ruffled the prevailing look of unclouded heavenly babyhood.

If any one thinks I am unfaithful to human fact, and overcharge the description of this child, I on my side doubt the extent of the experience of that man or woman. I admit the child a rarity, but a rarity in the right direction, and therefore a being with whom humanity has the greater need to be made acquainted. I admit that the best things are the commonest, but the highest types and the best combinations of them are the rarest. There is more love in the world than anything else, for instance; but the best love and the individual in whom love is supreme are the rarest of all things. That for which humanity has the strongest claim upon its workmen, is the representation of its own best; but the loudest demand of the present day is for the representation of that grade of humanity of which men see the most—that type of things which could never have been but that it might pass. The demand marks the commonness,

narrowness, low-levelled satisfaction of the age. It loves its own —not that which might be, and ought to be its own—not its better self, infinitely higher than its present, for the sake of whose approach it exists. I do not think that the age is worse in this respect than those which have preceded it, but that vulgarity, and a certain vile contentment swelling to self-admiration, have become more vocal than hitherto; just as unbelief, which I think in reality less prevailing than in former ages, has become largely more articulate, and thereby more loud and peremptory. But whatever the demand of the age, I insist that that which ought to be presented to its beholding, is the common good uncommonly developed, and that not because of its rarity, but because it is truer to humanity. Shall I admit those conditions, those facts, to be true exponents of humanity, which, except they be changed, purified, or abandoned, must soon cause that humanity to cease from its very name, must destroy its very being? To make the admission would be to assert that a house may be divided against itself, and yet stand. It is the noble, not the failure from the noble, that is the true human; and if I must show the failure, let it ever be with an eye to the final possible, yea, imperative, success. But in our day, a man who will accept any oddity of idiosyncratic development in manners, tastes, or habits, will refuse, not only as improbable, but as inconsistent with human nature, the representation of a man trying to be merely as noble as is absolutely essential to his being—except, indeed, he be at the same time represented as failing utterly in the attempt, and

compelled to fall back upon the imperfections of humanity, and acknowledge them as its laws. Its improbability, judged by the experience of most men I admit; its unreality in fact I deny; and its absolute unity with the true idea of humanity, I believe and assert.

It is hardly necessary for me now to remark, seeing my narrative must already have suggested it, that what kept Gibbie pure and honest was the rarely-developed, ever-active love of his kind. The human face was the one attraction to him in the universe. In deep fact, it is so to everyone; I state but the commonest reality in creation; only in Gibbie the fact had come to the surface; the common thing was his in uncommon degree and potency. Gibbie knew no music except the voice of man and woman; at least no other had as yet affected him. To be sure he had never heard much. Drunken sea-songs he heard every night almost; and now and then on Sundays he ran through a zone of psalm-singing; but neither of those could well be called music. There hung a caged bird here and there at a door in the poorer streets; but Gibbie's love embraced the lower creation also, and too tenderly for the enjoyment of its melody. The human bird loved liberty too dearly to gather anything but pain from the song of the little feathered brother who had lost it, and to whom he could not minister as to the drunkard. In general he ran from the presence of such a prisoner. But sometimes he would stop and try to comfort the naked little Freedom, disrobed of its space; and on one occasion was caught in the very act of delivering a

canary that hung outside a little shop. Any other than wee Gibbie would have been heartily cuffed for the offence, but the owner of the bird only smiled at the would-be liberator, and hung the cage a couple of feet higher on the wall. With such a passion of affection, then, finding vent in constant action, is it any wonder Gibbie's heart and hands should be too full for evil to occupy them even a little?

One night in the spring, entering Lucky Croale's common room, he saw there for the first time a negro sailor, whom the rest called Sambo, and was at once taken with his big, dark, radiant eyes, and his white teeth continually uncovering themselves in good-humoured smiles. Sambo had left the vessel in which he had arrived, was waiting for another, and had taken up his quarters at Lucky Croale's. Gibbie's advances he met instantly, and in a few days a strong mutual affection had sprung up between them. To Gibbie Sambo speedily became absolutely loving and tender, and Gibbie made him full return of devotion.

The negro was a man of immense muscular power, like not a few of his race, and, like most of them, not easily provoked, inheriting not a little of their hard-learned long-suffering. He bore even with those who treated him with far worse than the ordinary superciliousness of white to black; and when the rudest of city boys mocked him, only showed his teeth by way of smile. The ill-conditioned among Lucky Croale's customers and lodgers were constantly taking advantage of his good nature, and presuming upon his forbearance; but so long as they confined

themselves to mere insolence, or even bare-faced cheating, he endured with marvellous temper. It was possible, however, to go too far even with him.

One night Sambo was looking on at a game of cards, in which all the rest in the room were engaged. Happening to laugh at some turn it took, one of them, a Malay, who was losing, was offended, and abused him. Others objected to his having fun without risking money, and required him to join in the game. This for some reason or other he declined, and when the whole party at length insisted, positively refused. Thereupon they all took umbrage, nor did most of them make many steps of the ascent from displeasure to indignation, wrath, revenge; and then ensued a row. Gibbie had been sitting all the time on his friend's knee, every now and then stroking his black face, in which, as insult followed insult, the sunny blood kept slowly rising, making the balls of his eyes and his teeth look still whiter. At length a savage from Greenock threw a tumbler at him. Sambo, quick as a lizard, covered his face with his arm. The tumbler falling from it, struck Gibbie on the head—not severely, but hard enough to make him utter a little cry. At that sound, the latent fierceness came wide awake in Sambo. Gently as a nursing mother he set Gibbie down in a corner behind him, then with one rush sent every Jack of the company sprawling on the floor, with the table and bottles and glasses atop of them. At the vision of their plight his good humour instantly returned, he burst into a great hearty laugh, and proceeded at once to lift the table from off them. That

effected, he caught up Gibbie in his arms, and carried him with him to bed.

In the middle of the night Gibbie half woke, and, finding himself alone, sought his father's bosom; then, in the confusion between sleeping and waking, imagined his father's death come again. Presently he remembered it was in Sambo's arms he fell asleep, but where he was now he could not tell: certainly he was not in bed. Groping, he pushed a door, and a glimmer of light came in. He was in a closet of the room in which Sambo slept—and something was to do about his bed. He rose softly and peeped out, There stood several men, and a struggle was going on—nearly noiseless. Gibbie was half-dazed, and could not understand; but he had little anxiety about Sambo, in whose prowess he had a triumphant confidence. Suddenly came the sound of a great gush, and the group parted from the bed and vanished. Gibbie darted towards it. The words, "O Lord Jesus!" came to his ears, and he heard no more: they were poor Sambo's last in this world. The light of a street lamp fell upon the bed: the blood was welling, in great thick throbs, out of his huge black throat. They had bent his head back, and the gash gaped wide.

For some moments Gibbie stood in ghastly terror. No sound except a low gurgle came to his ears, and the horror of the stillness overmastered him. He never could recall what came next. When he knew himself again, he was in the street, running like the wind, he knew not whither. It was not that he dreaded any hurt to himself; horror, not fear, was behind him.

His next recollection of himself was in the first of the morning, on the lofty chain-bridge over the river Daur. Before him lay he knew not what, only escape from what was behind. His faith in men seemed ruined. The city, his home, was frightful to him. Quarrels and curses and blows he had been used to, and amidst them life could be lived. If he did not consciously weave them into his theories, he unconsciously wrapped them up in his confidence, and was at peace. But the last night had revealed something unknown before. It was as if the darkness had been cloven, and through the cleft he saw into hell. A thing had been done that could not be undone, and he thought it must be what people called murder. And Sambo was such a good man! He was almost as good a man as Gibbie's father, and now he would not breathe any more! Was he gone where Gibbie's father was gone? Was it the good men that stopped breathing and grew cold? But it was those wicked men that had deaded Sambo! And with that his first vague perception of evil and wrong in the world began to dawn.

He lifted his head from gazing down on the dark river. A man was approaching the bridge. He came from the awful city! Perhaps he wanted him! He fled along the bridge like a low-flying water-bird. If another man had appeared at the other end, he would have got through between the rods, and thrown himself into the river. But there was no one to oppose his escape; and after following the road a little way up the river, he turned aside into a thicket of shrubs on the nearly precipitous bank, and sat

down to recover the breath he had lost more from dismay than exertion.

The light grew. All at once he descried, far down the river, the steeples of the city. Alas! alas! there lay poor black Sambo, so dear to wee Sir Gibbie, motionless and covered with blood! He had two red mouths now, but was not able to speak a word with either! They would carry him to a churchyard and lay him in a hole to lie there for ever and ever. Would all the good people be laid into holes and leave Gibbie quite alone? Sitting and brooding thus, he fell into a dreamy state, in which, brokenly, from here and there, pictures of his former life grew out upon his memory. Suddenly, plainer than all the rest, came the last time he stood under Mistress Croale's window, waiting to help his father home. The same instant, back to the ear of his mind came his father's two words, as he had heard them through the window—"Up Daurside."

"Up Daurside!"—Here he was upon Daurside—a little way up too: he would go farther up. He rose and went on, while the great river kept flowing the other way, dark and terrible, down to the very door inside which lay Sambo with the huge gape in his big throat.

Meantime the murder came to the knowledge of the police, Mistress Croale herself giving the information, and all in the house were arrested. In the course of their examination, it came out that wee Sir Gibbie had gone to bed with the murdered man, and was now nowhere to be found. Either they had murdered

him too, or carried him off. The news spread, and the whole city was in commotion about his fate. It was credible enough that persons capable of committing such a crime on such an inoffensive person as the testimony showed poor Sambo, would be capable also of throwing the life of a child after that of the man to protect their own. The city was searched from end to end, from side to side, and from cellar to garret. Not a trace of him was to be found—but indeed Gibbie had always been easier to find than to trace, for he had no belongings of any sort to betray him. No one dreamed of his having fled straight to the country, and search was confined to the city.

The murderers were at length discovered, tried, and executed. They protested their innocence with regard to the child, and therein nothing appeared against them beyond the fact that he was missing. The result, so far as concerned Gibbie, was, that the talk of the city, where almost everyone knew him, was turned, in his absence, upon his history; and from the confused mass of hearsay that reached him, Mr. Sclater set himself to discover and verify the facts. For this purpose he burrowed about in the neighbourhoods Gibbie had chiefly frequented, and was so far successful as to satisfy himself that Gibbie, if he was alive, was Sir Gilbert Galbraith, Baronet; but his own lawyer was able to assure him that not an inch of property remained anywhere attached to the title. There were indeed relations of the boy's mother, who were of some small consequence in a neighbouring county, also one in business in Glasgow, or its neighbourhood,

reported wealthy; but these had entirely disowned her because of her marriage. All Mr. Sclater discovered besides was, in a lumber-room next the garret in which Sir George died, a box of papers—a glance at whose contents showed that they must at least prove a great deal of which he was already certain from other sources. A few of them had to do with the house in which they were found, still known as the Auld Hoose o' Galbraith; but most of them referred to property in land, and many were of ancient date. If the property were in the hands of descendants of the original stock, the papers would be of value in their eyes; and, in any case, it would be well to see to their safety. Mr. Sclater therefore had the chest removed to the garret of the manse, where it stood thereafter, little regarded, but able to answer for more than itself.

CHAPTER IX.
ADRIFT

Gibbie was now without a home. He had had a whole city for his dwelling, every street of which had been to him as another hall in his own house, every lane as a passage from one set of rooms to another, every court as a closet, every house as a safe, guarding the only possessions he had, the only possessions he knew how to value—his fellow-mortals, radiant with faces, and friendly with hands and tongues. Great as was his delight in freedom, a delight he revelled in from morning to night, and sometimes from night to morning, he had never had a notion of it that reached beyond the city, he never longed for larger space, for wider outlook. Space and outlook he had skyward—and seaward when he would, but even into these regions he had never yet desired to go. His world was the world of men; the presence of many was his greater room; his people themselves were his world. He had no idea of freedom in dissociation with human faces and voices and eyes. But now he had left all these, and as he ran from them a red pall seemed settling down behind him, wrapping up and hiding away his country, his home. For the first time in his life, the fatherless, motherless, brotherless, sisterless stray of the streets felt himself alone. The sensation was an awful one. He had lost so many, and had not one left! That gash in

Sambo's black throat had slain "a whole cityful." His loneliness grew upon him, until again he darted aside from the road into the bush, this time to hide from the Spectre of the Desert—the No Man. Deprived of human countenances, the face of creation was a mask without eyes, and liberty a mere negation. Not that Gibbie had ever thought about liberty; he had only enjoyed: not that he had ever thought about human faces; he had only loved them, and lived upon their smiles. "Gibbie wadna need to gang to h'aven," said Mysie, the baker's daughter, to her mother, one night, as they walked home from a merry-making. "What for that, lassie?" returned her mother. "Cause he wad be meeserable whaur there was nae drunk fowk," answered Mysie. And now it seemed to the poor, shocked, heart-wounded creature, as if the human face were just the one thing he could no more look upon. One haunted him, the black one, with the white, staring eyes, the mouth in its throat, and the white grinning teeth.

It was a cold, fresh morning, cloudy and changeful, towards the end of April. It had rained, and would rain again; it might snow. Heavy undefined clouds, with saffron breaks and borders, hung about the east, but what was going to happen there—at least he did not think; he did not know east from west, and I doubt whether, although he had often seen the sun set, he had ever seen him rise. Yet even to him, city-creature as he was, it was plain something was going to happen there. And happen it did presently, and that with a splendour that for a moment blinded Gibbie. For just at the horizon there was a long horizontal slip

of blue sky, and through that crack the topmost arc of the rising sun shot suddenly a thousand arrows of radiance into the brain of the boy. But the too-much light scorched there a blackness instantly; and to the soul of Gibbie it was the blackness of the room from which he had fled, and upon it out came the white eyeballs and the brilliant teeth of his dead Sambo, and the red burst from his throat that answered the knife of the Malay. He shrieked, and struck with his hands against the sun from which came the terrible vision. Had he been a common child, his reason would have given way; but one result of the overflow of his love was, that he had never yet known fear for himself. His sweet confident face, innocent eyes, and caressing ways, had almost always drawn a response more or less in kind; and that certain some should not repel him, was a fuller response from them than gifts from others. Except now and then, rarely, a street boy a little bigger than himself, no one had ever hurt him, and the hurt upon these occasions had not gone very deep, for the child was brave and hardy. So now it was not fear, but the loss of old confidence, a sickness coming over the heart and brain of his love, that unnerved him. It was not the horrid cruelty to his friend, and his own grievous loss thereby, but the recoil of his loving endeavour that, jarring him out of every groove of thought, every socket of habit, every joint of action, cast him from the city, and made of him a wanderer indeed, not a wanderer in a strange country, but a wanderer in a strange world.

To no traveller could one land well be so different from

another, as to Gibbie the country was from the town. He had seen bushes and trees before, but only over garden walls, or in one or two of the churchyards. He had looked from the quay across to the bare shore on the other side, with its sandy hills, and its tall lighthouse on the top of the great rocks that bordered the sea; but, so looking, he had beheld space as one looking from this world into the face of the moon, as a child looks upon vastness and possible dangers from his nurse's arms where it cannot come near him; for houses backed the quay all along; the city was behind him, and spread forth her protecting arms. He had, once or twice, run out along the pier, which shot far into the immensity of the sea, like a causeway to another world—a stormy thread of granite, beaten upon both sides by the waves of the German Ocean; but it was with the sea and not the country he then made the small acquaintance—and that not without terror. The sea was as different from the city as the air into which he had looked up at night—too different to compare against it and feel the contrast; on neither could he set foot; in neither could he be required to live and act—as now in this waste of enterable and pervious extent.

Its own horror drove the vision away, and Gibbie saw the world again—saw, but did not love it. The sun seemed but to have looked up to mock him and go down again, for he had crossed the crack, and was behind a thick mass of cloud; a cold damp wind, spotted with sparkles of rain, blew fitfully from the east; the low bushes among which he sat, sent forth a chill sighing all about him, as they sifted the wind into sound; the

smell of the damp earth was strange to him—he did not know the freshness, the new birth of which it breathed; below him the gloomy river, here deep, smooth, moody, sullen, there puckered with the grey ripples of a shallow laughter under the cold breeze, went flowing heedless to the city. There only was—or had been, friendliness, comfort, home! This was emptiness—the abode of things, not beings. Yet never once did Gibbie think of returning to the city. He rose and wandered up the wide road along the river bank, farther and farther from it—his only guide the words of his father, "Up Daurside;" his sole comfort the feeling of having once more to do with his father so long departed, some relation still with the paradise of his old world. Along cultivated fields and copses on the one side, and on the other a steep descent to the river, covered here and there with trees, but mostly with rough grass and bushes and stones, he followed the king's highway. There were buttercups and plenty of daisies within his sight—primroses, too, on the slope beneath; but he did not know flowers, and his was not now the mood for discovering what they were. The exercise revived him, and he began to be hungry. But how could there be anything to eat in the desert, inhospitable succession of trees and fields and hedges, through which the road wound endlessly along, like a dead street, having neither houses nor paving stones? Hunger, however, was far less enfeebling to Gibbie than to one accustomed to regular meals, and he was in no anxiety about either when or what he should eat.

The morning advanced, and by-and-by he began to meet a

fellow-creature now and then upon the road; but at sight of everyone a feeling rose in him such as he had never had towards human being before: they seemed somehow of a different kind from those in the town, and they did not look friendly as they passed. He did not know that he presented to them a very different countenance from that which his fellow-citizens had always seen him wear; for the mingled and conflicting emotions of his spirit had sent out upon it an expression which, accompanied by the misery of his garments, might well, to the superficial or inexperienced observer, convey the idea that he was a fugitive and guilty. He was so uncomfortable at length from the way the people he met scrutinized him that, when he saw anyone coming, he would instantly turn aside and take the covert of thicket, or hedge, or stone wall, until the bearer of eyes had passed. His accustomed trot, which he kept up for several hours, made him look the more suspicious; but his feet, hardened from very infancy as they were, soon found the difference between the smooth flags and the sharp stones of the road, and before noon he was walking at quite a sober, although still active, pace. Doubtless it slackened the sooner that he knew no goal, no end to his wandering. Up Daurside was the one vague notion he had of his calling, his destiny, and with his short, quick step, his progress was considerable; he passed house after house, farm after farm; but, never in the way of asking for anything, though as little in the way of refusing, he went nearer none of them than the road led him. Besides, the houses were very unlike

those in the city, and not at all attractive to him. He came at length to a field, sloping to the road, which was covered with leaves like some he had often seen in the market. They drew him; and as there was but a low and imperfect hedge between, he got over, and found it was a crop of small yellow turnips. He gathered as many as he could carry, and ate them as he went along. Happily no agricultural person encountered him for some distance, though Gibbie knew no special cause to congratulate himself upon that, having not the slightest conscience of offence in what he did. His notions of property were all associated with well-known visible or neighbouring owners, and in the city he would never have dreamed of touching anything that was not given him, except it lay plainly a lost thing. But here, where everything was so different, and he saw none of the signs of ownership to which he was accustomed, the idea of property did not come to him; here everything looked lost, or on the same category with the chips and parings and crusts that were thrown out in the city, and became common property. Besides, the love which had hitherto rendered covetousness impossible, had here no object whose presence might have suggested a doubt, to supply in a measure the lack of knowledge; hunger, instead, was busy in his world. I trust there were few farmers along the road who would have found fault with him for taking one or two; but none, I suspect, would have liked to see him with all the turnips he could carry, eating them like a very rabbit: they were too near a city to look upon such a spectacle with indifference. Gibbie

made no attempt to hide his spoil; whatever could have given birth to the sense that caution would be necessary, would have prevented him from taking it. While yet busy he came upon a little girl feeding a cow by the roadside. She saw how he ate the turnips, and offered him a bit of oatmeal bannock. He received it gladly, and with beaming eyes offered her a turnip. She refused it with some indignation. Gibbie, disappointed, but not ungrateful, resumed his tramp, eating his bannock. He came soon after to a little stream that ran into the great river. For a few moments he eyed it very doubtfully, thinking it must, like the kennels along the sides of the streets, be far too dirty to drink of; but the way it sparkled and sang—most unscientific reasons—soon satisfied him, and he drank and was refreshed. He had still two turnips left, but, after the bannock, he did not seem to want them, and stowed them in the ends of the sleeves of his jacket, folded back into great cuffs.

All day the cold spring weather continued, with more of the past winter in it than of the coming summer. The sun would shine out for a few moments, with a grey, weary, old light, then retreat as if he had tried, but really could not. Once came a slight fall of snow, which, however, melted the moment it touched the earth. The wind kept blowing cheerlessly by fits, and the world seemed growing tired of the same thing over again so often. At length the air began to grow dusk: then, first, fears of the darkness, to Gibbie utterly unknown before, and only born of the preceding night, began to make him aware of their existence in

the human world. They seemed to rise up from his lonely heart; they seemed to descend upon him out of the thickening air; they seemed to catch at his breath, and gather behind him as he went. But, happily, before it was quite dark, and while yet he could distinguish between objects, he came to the gate of a farmyard; it waked in him the hope of finding some place where he could sleep warmer than in the road, and he clambered over it. Nearest of the buildings to the gate, stood an open shed, and he could see the shafts of carts projecting from it: perhaps in one of those carts, or under it, he might find a place that would serve him to sleep in: he did not yet know what facilities for repose the country affords. But just as he entered the shed, he spied at the farther corner of it, outside, a wooden structure, like a small house, and through the arched door of it saw the floor covered with nice-looking straw. He suspected it to be a dog's kennel; and presently the chain lying beside it, with a collar at the end, satisfied him it was. The dog was absent, and it looked altogether enticing! He crept in, got under as much of the straw as he could heap over him, and fell fast asleep.

In a few minutes, as it seemed to him, he was roused by the great voice of a dog in conversation with a boy: the boy seemed, by the sound of the chain, to be fastening the collar on the dog's neck, and presently left him. The dog, which had been on the rampage the whole afternoon, immediately turned to creep in and rest till supper time, presenting to Gibbie, who had drawn himself up at the back of the kennel, the intelligent

countenance of a large Newfoundland. Now Gibbie had been honoured with the acquaintance of many dogs, and the friendship of most of them, for a lover of humanity can hardly fail to be a lover of caninity. Even among dogs, however, there are ungracious individuals, and Gibbie had once or twice been bitten by quadrupedal worshippers of the respectable. Hence, with the sight of the owner of the dwelling, it dawned upon him that he must be startled to find a stranger in his house, and might, regarding him as an intruder rather than a guest, worry him before he had time to explain himself. He darted forward therefore to get out, but had scarcely reached the door, when the dog put in his nose, ready to follow with all he was and had. Gibbie, thereupon, began a loud barking, as much as to say —"Here I am: please do nothing without reflection." The dog started back in extreme astonishment, his ears erect, and a keen look of question on his sagacious visage: what strange animal, speaking like, and yet so unlike, an orthodox dog, could have got into his very chamber? Gibbie, amused at the dog's fright, and assured by his looks that he was both a good-natured and reasonable animal, burst into a fit of merry laughter as loud as his previous barking, and a good deal more musical. The dog evidently liked it better, and took it as a challenge to play: after a series of sharp bursts of barking, his eyes flashing straight in at the door, and his ears lifted up like two plumes on the top of them, he darted into the kennel, and began poking his nose into his visitor. Gibbie fell to patting and kissing and hugging him as if

he had been a human—as who can tell but he was?—glad of any companion that belonged to the region of the light; and they were friends at once. Mankind had disappointed him, but here was a dog! Gibbie was not the one to refuse mercies which yet he would not have been content to pray for. Both were tired, however, for both had been active that day, and a few minutes of mingled wrestling and endearment, to which, perhaps, the narrowness of their play-ground gave a speedier conclusion, contented both, after which they lay side by side in peace, Gibbie with his head on the dog's back, and the dog every now and then turning his head over his shoulder to lick Gibbie's face.

Again he was waked by approaching steps, and the same moment the dog darted from under him, and with much rattle out of the kennel, in front of which he stood and whined expectant. It was not quite dark, for the clouds had drifted away, and the stars were shining, so that, when he put out his head, he was able to see the dim form of a woman setting down something before the dog—into which he instantly plunged his nose, and began gobbling. The sound stirred up all the latent hunger in Gibbie, and he leaped out, eager to have a share. A large wooden bowl was on the ground, and the half of its contents of porridge and milk was already gone; for the poor dog had not yet had experience enough to be perfect in hospitality, and had forgotten his guest's wants in his own: it was plain that, if Gibbie was to have any, he must lose no time in considering the means. Had he had a long nose and mouth all in one like him, he would

have plunged them in beside the dog's; but the flatness of his mouth causing the necessity, in the case of such an attempt, of bringing the whole of his face into contact with the food, there was not room in the dish for the two to feed together after the same fashion, so that he was driven to the sole other possible expedient, that of making a spoon of his hand. The dog neither growled nor pushed away the spoon, but instantly began to gobble twice as fast as before, and presently was licking the bottom of the dish. Gibbie's hand, therefore, made but few journeys to his mouth, but what it carried him was good food—better than any he had had that day. When all was gone he crept again into the kennel; the dog followed, and soon they were both fast asleep in each other's arms and legs.

Gibbie woke at sunrise and went out. His host came after him, and stood wagging his tail and looking wistfully up in his face. Gibbie understood him, and, as the sole return he could make for his hospitality, undid his collar. Instantly he rushed off, his back going like a serpent, cleared the gate at a bound, and scouring madly across a field, vanished from his sight; whereupon Gibbie too set out to continue his journey up Daurside.

This day was warmer; the spring had come a step nearer; the dog had been a comforter to him, and the horror had begun to assuage; he began to grow aware of the things about him, and to open his eyes to them. Once he saw a primrose in a little dell, and left the road to look at it. But as he went, he set his foot in the water of a chalybeate spring, which was trickling

through the grass, and dyeing the ground red about it: filled with horror he fled, and for some time dared never go near a primrose. And still upon his right hand was the great river, flowing down towards the home he had left; now through low meadows, now through upshouldered fields of wheat and oats, now through rocky heights covered with the graceful silver-barked birch, the mountain ash, and the fir. Every time Gibbie, having lost sight of it by some turn of the road or some interposing eminence, caught its gleam afresh, his first feeling was that it was hurrying to the city, where the dead man lay, to tell where Gibbie was. Why he, who had from infancy done just as he pleased, should now have begun to dread interference with his liberty, he could not himself have told. Perhaps the fear was but the shadow of his new-born aversion to the place where he had seen those best-loved countenances change so suddenly and terribly—cease to smile, but not cease to stare.

That second day he fared better, too, than the first; for he came on a family of mongrel gipsies, who fed him well out of their kettle, and, taken with his looks, thought to keep him for begging purposes. But now that Gibbie's confidence in human nature had been so rudely shaken, he had already begun, with analysis unconscious, to read the human countenance, questioning it; and he thought he saw something that would hurt, in the eyes of two of the men and one of the women. Therefore, in the middle of the night, he slipped silently out of the tent of rags, in which he had lain down with the gipsy children, and ere the mothers woke,

was a mile up the river.

But I must not attempt the detail of this part of his journey. It is enough that he got through it. He met with some adventures, and suffered a good deal from hunger and cold. Had he not been hardy as well as fearless he must have died. But, now from this quarter, now from that, he got all that was needful for one of God's birds. Once he found in a hedge the nest of an errant and secretive hen, and recognizing the eggs as food authorized by the shop windows and market of the city, soon qualified himself to have an opinion of their worth. Another time he came upon a girl milking a cow in a shed, and his astonishment at the marvels of the process was such, that he forgot even the hunger that was rendering him faint. He had often seen cows in the city, but had never suspected what they were capable of. When the girl caught sight of him, staring with open mouth, she was taken with such a fit of laughter, that the cow, which was ill-tempered, kicked out, and overturned the pail. Now because of her troublesomeness this cow was not milked beside the rest, and the shed where she stood was used for farm-implements only. The floor of it was the earth, beaten hard, and worn into hollows. When the milk settled in one of these, Gibbie saw that it was lost to the girl, and found to him: undeterred by the astounding nature of the spring from which he had just seen it flow, he threw himself down, and drank like a calf. Her laughter ended, the girl was troubled: she would be scolded for her clumsiness in allowing Hawkie to kick over the pail, but the eagerness of the boy after the milk troubled her

more. She told him to wait, and running to the house, returned with two large pieces of oatcake, which she gave him.

Thus, one way and another, food came to Gibbie. Drink was to be had in almost any hollow. Sleep was scattered everywhere over the world. For warmth, only motion and a seasoned skin were necessary: the latter Gibbie had; the former, already a habit learned in the streets, had now become almost a passion.

CHAPTER X.
THE BARN

By this time Gibbie had got well up towards the roots of the hills of Gormgarnet, and the river had dwindled greatly. He was no longer afraid of it, but would lie for hours listening to its murmurs over its pebbly bed, and sometimes even sleep in the hollows of its banks, or below the willows that overhung it. Every here and there, a brown rivulet from some peat-bog on a hill —brown and clear, like smoke-crystals molten together, flowed into it, and when he had lost it, guided him back to his guide. Farm after farm he passed, here one widely bordering a valley stream, there another stretching its skirts up the hillsides till they were lost in mere heather, where the sheep wandered about, cropping what stray grass-blades and other eatables they could find. Lower down he had passed through small towns and large villages: here farms and cottages, with an occasional country-seat and little village of low thatched houses, made up the abodes of men. By this time he had become greatly reconciled to the loneliness of Nature, and no more was afraid in her solitary presence.

At the same time his heart had begun to ache and long after the communion of his kind. For not once since he set out— and that seemed months where it was only weeks, had he had

an opportunity of doing anything for anybody—except, indeed, unfastening the dog's collar; and not to be able to help was to Gibbie like being dead. Everybody, down to the dogs, had been doing for him, and what was to become of him! It was a state altogether of servitude into which he had fallen.

May had now set in, but up here among the hills she was May by courtesy only: or if she was May, she would never be Might. She was, indeed, only April, with her showers and sunshine, her tearful, childish laughter, and again the frown, and the despair irremediable. Nay, as if she still kept up a secret correspondence with her cousin March, banished for his rudeness, she would not very seldom shake from her skirts a snow storm, and oftener the dancing hail. Then out would come the sun behind her, and laugh, and say—"I could not help that; but here I am all the same, coming to you as fast as I can!" The green crops were growing darker, and the trees were all getting out their nets to catch carbon. The lambs were frolicking, and in sheltered places the flowers were turning the earth into a firmament. And now a mere daisy was enough to delight the heart of Gibbie. His joy in humanity so suddenly checked, and his thirst for it left unslaked, he had begun to see the human look in the face of the commonest flowers, to love the trusting stare of the daisy, that gold-hearted boy, and the gentle despondency of the girl harebell, dreaming of her mother, the azure. The wind, of which he had scarce thought as he met it roaming the streets like himself, was now a friend of his solitude, bringing him sweet odours, alive with the souls

of bees, and cooling with bliss the heat of the long walk. Even when it blew cold along the waste moss, waving the heads of the cotton-grass, the only live thing visible, it was a lover, and kissed him on the forehead. Not that Gibbie knew what a kiss was, any more than he knew about the souls of bees. He did not remember ever having been kissed. In that granite city, the women were not much given to kissing children, even their own, but if they had been, who of them would have thought of kissing Gibbie! The baker's wife, kind as she always was to him, would have thought it defilement to press her lips to those of the beggar child. And how is any child to thrive without kisses! The first caresses Gibbie ever knew as such, were given him by Mother Nature herself. It was only, however, by degrees, though indeed rapid degrees, that he became capable of them. In the first part of his journey he was stunned, stupid, lost in change, distracted between a suddenly vanished past, and a future slow dawning in the present. He felt little beyond hunger, and that vague urging up Daurside, with occasional shoots of pleasure from kindness, mostly of woman and dog. He was less shy of the country people by this time, but he did not care to seek them. He thought them not nearly so friendly and good as the town-people, forgetting that these knew him and those did not. To Gibbie an introduction was the last thing necessary for any one who wore a face, and he could not understand why they looked at him so.

Whatever is capable of aspiring, must be troubled that it may wake and aspire—then troubled still, that it may hold fast, be

itself, and aspire still.

One evening his path vanished between twilight and moonrise, and just as it became dark he found himself at a rough gate, through which he saw a field. There was a pretty tall hedge on each side of the gate, and he was now a sufficiently experienced traveller to conclude that he was not far from some human abode. He climbed the gate and found himself in a field of clover. It was a splendid big bed, and even had the night not been warm, he would not have hesitated to sleep in it. He had never had a cold, and had as little fear for his health as for his life. He was hungry, it is true; but although food was doubtless more delicious to such hunger as his—that of the whole body, than it can be to the mere palate and culinary imagination of an epicure, it was not so necessary to him that he could not go to sleep without it. So down he lay in the clover, and was at once unconscious.

When he woke, the moon was high in the heavens, and had melted the veil of the darkness from the scene of still, well-ordered comfort. A short distance from his couch, stood a little army of ricks, between twenty and thirty of them, constructed perfectly—smooth and upright and round and large, each with its conical top netted in with straw-rope, and finished off with what the herd-boy called a toupican—a neatly tied and trim tuft of the straw with which it was thatched, answering to the stone-ball on the top of a gable. Like triangles their summits stood out against the pale blue, moon-diluted air. They were treasure-caves, hollowed out of space, and stored with the best of

ammunition against the armies of hunger and want; but Gibbie, though he had seen many of them, did not know what they were. He had seen straw used for the bedding of cattle and horses, and supposed that the chief end of such ricks. Nor had he any clear idea that the cattle themselves were kept for any other object than to make them comfortable and happy. He had stood behind their houses in the dark, and heard them munching and grinding away even in the night. Probably the country was for the cattle, as the towns for the men; and that would explain why the country-people were so inferior. While he stood gazing, a wind arose behind the hills, and came blowing down some glen that opened northwards; Gibbie felt it cold, and sought the shelter of the ricks.

Great and solemn they looked as he drew nigh—near each other, yet enough apart for plenty of air to flow and eddy between. Over a low wall of unmortared stones, he entered their ranks: above him, as he looked up from their broad base, they ascended huge as pyramids, and peopled the waste air with giant forms. How warm it was in the round-winding paths amongst the fruitful piles—tombs these, no cenotaphs! He wandered about them, now in a dusky yellow gloom, and now in the cold blue moonlight, which they seemed to warm. At length he discovered that the huge things were flanked on one side by a long low house, in which there was a door, horizontally divided into two parts. Gibbie would fain have got in, to try whether the place was good for sleep; but he found both halves fast. In the lower half, however, he spied a hole, which, though not so large, reminded

him of the entrance to the kennel of his dog host; but alas! it had a door too, shut from the inside. There might be some way of opening it. He felt about, and soon discovered that it was a sliding valve, which he could push to either side. It was, in fact, the cat's door, specially constructed for her convenience of entrance and exit. For the cat is the guardian of the barn; the grain which tempts the rats and mice is no temptation to her; the rats and mice themselves are; upon them she executes justice, and remains herself an incorruptible, because untempted, therefore a respectable member of the farm-community—only the dairy door must be kept shut; that has no cat-wicket in it.

The hole was a small one, but tempting to the wee baronet; he might perhaps be able to squeeze himself through. He tried and succeeded, though with some little difficulty. The moon was there before him, shining through a pane or two of glass over the door, and by her light on the hard brown clay floor, Gibbie saw where he was, though if he had been told he was in the barn, he would neither have felt nor been at all the wiser. It was a very old-fashioned barn. About a third of it was floored with wood—dark with age—almost as brown as the clay—for threshing upon with flails. At that labour two men had been busy during the most of the preceding day, and that was how, in the same end of the barn, rose a great heap of oat-straw, showing in the light of the moon like a mound of pale gold. Had Gibbie had any education in the marvellous, he might now, in the midnight and moonlight, have well imagined himself in some treasure-house of the gnomes.

What he saw in the other corner was still liker gold, and was indeed greater than gold, for it was life—the heap, namely, of corn threshed from the straw: Gibbie recognized this as what he had seen given to horses. But now the temptation to sleep, with such facilities presented, was overpowering, and took from him all desire to examine further: he shot into the middle of the loose heap of straw, and vanished from the glimpses of the moon, burrowing like a mole. In the heart of the golden warmth, he lay so dry and comfortable that, notwithstanding his hunger had waked with him, he was presently in a faster sleep than before. And indeed what more luxurious bed, or what bed conducive to softer slumber was there in the world to find!

"The moving moon went down the sky," the cold wind softened and grew still; the stars swelled out larger; the rats came, and then came puss, and the rats went with a scuffle and patter; the pagan grey came in like a sleep-walker, and made the barn dreary as a dull dream; then the horses began to fidget with their big feet, the cattle to low with their great trombone throats, and the cocks to crow as if to give warning for the last time against the devil, the world, and the flesh; the men in the adjoining chamber woke, yawned, stretched themselves mightily, and rose; the god-like sun rose after them, and, entering the barn with them, drove out the grey; and through it all the orphan lay warm in God's keeping and his nest of straw, like the butterfly of a huge chrysalis.

When at length Gibbie became once more aware of existence,

it was through a stormy invasion of the still realm of sleep; the blows of two flails fell persistent and quick-following, first on the thick head of the sheaf of oats untied and cast down before them, then grew louder and more deafening as the oats flew and the chaff fluttered, and the straw flattened and broke and thinned and spread—until at last they thundered in great hard blows on the wooden floor. It was the first of these last blows that shook Gibbie awake. What they were or indicated he could not tell. He wormed himself softly round in the straw to look out and see.

Now whether it was that sleep was yet heavy upon him, and bewildered his eyes, or that his imagination had in dreams been busy with foregone horrors, I cannot tell; but, as he peered through the meshes of the crossing and blinding straws, what he seemed to see was the body of an old man with dishevelled hair, whom, prostrate on the ground, they were beating to death with great sticks. His tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, not a sound could he utter, not a finger could he move; he had no choice but to lie still, and witness the fierce enormity. But it is good that we are compelled to see some things, life amongst the rest, to what we call the end of them. By degrees Gibbie's sight cleared; the old man faded away; and what was left of him he could see to be only an armful of straw. The next sheaf they threw down, he perceived, under their blows, the corn flying out of it, and began to understand a little. When it was finished, the corn that had flown dancing from its home, like hail from its cloud, was swept aside to the common heap, and the straw tossed up on

the mound that harboured Gibbie. It was well that the man with the pitchfork did not spy his eyes peering out from the midst of the straw: he might have taken him for some wild creature, and driven the prongs into him. As it was, Gibbie did not altogether like the look of him, and lay still as a stone. Then another sheaf was unbound and cast on the floor, and the blows of the flails began again. It went on thus for an hour and a half, and Gibbie although he dropped asleep several times, was nearly stupid with the noise. The men at length, however, swept up the corn and tossed up the straw for the last time, and went out. Gibbie, judging by his own desires, thought they must have gone to eat, but did not follow them, having generally been ordered away the moment he was seen in a farmyard. He crept out, however, and began to look about him—first of all for something he could eat. The oats looked the most likely, and he took a mouthful for a trial. He ground at them severely, but, hungry as he was, he failed to find oats good for food. Their hard husks, their dryness, their instability, all slipping past each other at every attempt to crush them with his teeth, together foiled him utterly. He must search farther. Looking round him afresh, he saw an open loft, and climbing on the heap in which he had slept, managed to reach it. It was at the height of the walls, and the couples of the roof rose immediately from it. At the farther end was a heap of hay, which he took for another kind of straw. Then he spied something he knew; a row of cheeses lay on a shelf suspended from the rafters, ripening. Gibbie knew them well from the shop windows—knew

they were cheeses, and good to eat, though whence and how they came he did not know, his impression being that they grew in the fields like the turnips. He had still the notion uncorrected, that things in the country belonged to nobody in particular, and were mostly for the use of animals, with which, since he became a wanderer, he had almost come to class himself. He was very hungry. He pounced upon a cheese and lifted it between his two hands; it smelled good, but felt very hard. That was no matter: what else were teeth made strong and sharp for? He tried them on one of the round edges, and, nibbling actively, soon got through to the softer body of the cheese. But he had not got much farther when he heard the men returning, and desisted, afraid of being discovered by the noise he made. The readiest way to conceal himself was to lie down flat on the loft, and he did so just where he could see the threshing-floor over the edge of it by lifting his head. This, however, he scarcely ventured to do; and all he could see as he lay was the tip of the swing-bar of one of the flails, ever as it reached the highest point of its ascent. But to watch for it very soon ceased to be interesting; and although he had eaten so little of the cheese, it had yet been enough to make him dreadfully thirsty, therefore he greatly desired to get away. But he dared not go down: with their sticks those men might knock him over in a moment! So he lay there thinking of the poor little hedgehog he had seen on the road as he came; how he stood watching it, and wishing he had a suit made all of great pins, which he could set up when he pleased; and how the driver of a cart, catching sight

of him at the foot of the hedge, gave him a blow with his whip, and, poor fellow! notwithstanding his clothes of pins, that one blow of a whip was too much for him! There seemed nothing in the world but killing!

At length he could, unoccupied with something else, bear his thirst no longer, and, squirming round on the floor, crept softly towards the other end of the loft, to see what was to be seen there.

He found that the heap of hay was not in the loft at all. It filled a small chamber in the stable, in fact; and when Gibbie clambered upon it, what should he see below him on the other side, but a beautiful white horse, eating some of the same sort of stuff he was now lying upon! Beyond he could see the backs of more horses, but they were very different—big and clumsy, and not white. They were all eating, and this was their food on which he lay! He wished he too could eat it—and tried, but found it even less satisfactory than the oats, for it nearly choked him, and set him coughing so that he was in considerable danger of betraying his presence to the men in the barn. How did the horses manage to get such dry stuff down their throats? But the cheese was dry too, and he could eat that! No doubt the cheese, as well as the fine straw, was there for the horses! He would like to see the beautiful white creature down there eat a bit of it; but with all his big teeth he did not think he could manage a whole cheese, and how to get a piece broken off for him, with those men there, he could not devise. It would want a long-handled hammer like those with which he had seen men breaking stones on the road.

A door opened beyond, and a man came in and led two of the horses out, leaving the door open. Gibbie clambered down from the top of the hay into the stall beside the white horse, and ran out. He was almost in the fields, had not even a fence to cross.

He cast a glance around, and went straight for a neighbouring hollow, where, taught by experience, he hoped to find water.

CHAPTER XI.
JANET

Once away, Gibbie had no thought of returning. Up Daurside was the sole propulsive force whose existence he recognized. But when he lifted his head from drinking at the stream, which was one of some size, and, greatly refreshed, looked up its channel, a longing seized him to know whence came the water of life which had thus restored him to bliss—how a burn first appears upon the earth. He thought it might come from the foot of a great conical mountain which seemed but a little way off. He would follow it up and see. So away he went, yielding at once, as was his wont, to the first desire that came. He had not trotted far along the bank, however, before, at a sharp turn it took, he saw that its course was a much longer one than he had imagined, for it turned from the mountain, and led up among the roots of other hills; while here in front of him, direct from the mountain, as it seemed, came down a smaller stream, and tumbled noisily into this. The larger burn would lead him too far from the Daur; he would follow the smaller one. He found a wide shallow place, crossed the larger, and went up the side of the smaller.

Doubly free after his imprisonment of the morning, Gibbie sped joyously along. Already nature, her largeness, her openness, her loveliness, her changefulness, her oneness in change, had

begun to heal the child's heart, and comfort him in his disappointment with his kind. The stream he was now ascending ran along a claw of the mountain, which claw was covered with almost a forest of pine, protecting little colonies of less hardy timber. Its heavy green was varied with the pale delicate fringes of the fresh foliage of the larches, filling the air with aromatic breath. In the midst of their soft tufts, each tuft buttoned with a brown spot, hung the rich brown knobs and tassels of last year's cones. But the trees were all on the opposite side of the stream, and appeared to be mostly on the other side of a wall. Where Gibbie was, the mountain-root was chiefly of rock, interspersed with heather.

A little way up the stream, he came to a bridge over it, closed at the farther end by iron gates between pillars, each surmounted by a wolf's head in stone. Over the gate on each side leaned a rowan-tree, with trunk and branches aged and gnarled amidst their fresh foliage. He crossed the burn to look through the gate, and pressed his face between the bars to get a better sight of a tame rabbit that had got out of its hutch. It sat, like a Druid white with age, in the midst of a gravel drive, much overgrown with moss, that led through a young larch wood, with here and there an ancient tree, lonely amidst the youth of its companions. Suddenly from the wood a large spaniel came bounding upon the rabbit. Gibbie gave a shriek, and the rabbit made one white flash into the wood, with the dog after him. He turned away sad at heart.

"Ilka cratur 'at can," he said to himself, "ates ilka cratur 'at

canna!"

It was his first generalization, but not many years passed before he supplemented it with a conclusion:

"But the man 'at wad be a man, he maunna."

Resuming his journey of investigation, he trotted along the bank of the burn, farther and farther up, until he could trot no more, but must go clambering over great stones, or sinking to the knees in bog, patches of it red with iron, from which he would turn away with a shudder. Sometimes he walked in the water, along the bed of the burn itself; sometimes he had to scramble up its steep side, to pass one of the many little cataracts of its descent. Here and there a small silver birch, or a mountain-ash, or a stunted fir-tree, looking like a wizard child, hung over the stream. Its banks were mainly of rock and heather, but now and then a small patch of cultivation intervened. Gibbie had no thought that he was gradually leaving the abodes of men behind him; he knew no reason why in ascending things should change, and be no longer as in plainer ways. For what he knew, there might be farm after farm, up and up for ever, to the gates of heaven. But it would no longer have troubled him greatly to leave all houses behind him for a season. A great purple foxglove could do much now—just at this phase of his story, to make him forget—not the human face divine, but the loss of it. A lark aloft in the blue, from whose heart, as from a fountain whose roots were lost in the air, its natural source, issued, not a stream, but an ever spreading lake of song, was now more to him than

the memory of any human voice he had ever heard, except his father's and Sambo's. But he was not yet quite out and away from the dwellings of his kind.

I may as well now make the attempt to give some idea of Gibbie's appearance, as he showed after so long wandering. Of dress he had hardly enough left to carry the name. Shoes, of course, he had none. Of the shape of trousers there remained nothing, except the division before and behind in the short petticoat to which they were reduced; and those rudimentary divisions were lost in the multitude of rents of equal apparent significance. He had never, so far as he knew, had a shirt upon his body; and his sole other garment was a jacket, so much too large for him, that to retain the use of his hands he had folded back the sleeves quite to his elbows. Thus reversed they became pockets, the only ones he had, and in them he stowed whatever provisions were given him of which he could not make immediate use—porridge and sowens and mashed potatoes included: they served him, in fact, like the first of the stomachs of those animals which have more than one—concerning which animals, by the way, I should much like to know what they were in "Pythagoras' time." His head had plentiful protection in his own natural crop—had never either had or required any other. That would have been of the gold order, had not a great part of its colour been sunburnt, rained, and frozen out of it. All ways it pointed, as if surcharged with electric fluid, crowning him with a wildness which was in amusing contrast with the placidity of his countenance. Perhaps

the resulting queerness in the expression of the little vagrant, a look as if he had been hunted till his body and soul were nearly ruffled asunder, and had already parted company in aim and interest, might have been the first thing to strike a careless observer. But if the heart was not a careless one, the eye would look again and discover a stronger stillness than mere placidity —a sort of live peace abiding in that weather-beaten little face under its wild crown of human herbage. The features of it were well-shaped, and not smaller than proportioned to the small whole of his person. His eyes—partly, perhaps, because there was so little flesh upon his bones—were large, and in repose had much of a soft animal expression: there was not in them the look of You and I know. Frequently, too, when occasion roused the needful instinct, they had a sharp expression of outlook and readiness, which, without a trace of fierceness or greed, was yet equally animal. Only all the time there was present something else, beyond characterization: behind them something seemed to lie asleep. His hands and feet were small and childishly dainty, his whole body well-shaped and well put together—of which the style of his dress rather quashed the evidence.

Such was Gibbie to the eye, as he rose from Daurside to the last cultivated ground on the borders of the burn, and the highest dwelling on the mountain. It was the abode of a cottar, and was a dependency of the farm he had just left. The cottar was an old man of seventy; his wife was nearly sixty. They had reared stalwart sons and shapely daughters, now at service here

and there in the valleys below—all ready to see God in nature, and recognize Him in providence. They belong to a class now, I fear, extinct, but once, if my love prejudice not my judgment too far, the glory and strength of Scotland: their little acres are now swallowed up in the larger farms.

It was a very humble dwelling, built of turf upon a foundation of stones, and roofed with turf and straw—warm, and nearly impervious to the searching airs of the mountain-side. One little window of a foot and a half square looked out on the universe. At one end stood a stack of peat, half as big as the cottage itself, All around it were huge rocks, some of them peaks whose masses went down to the very central fires, others only fragments that had rolled from above. Here and there a thin crop was growing in patches amongst them, the red grey stone lifting its baldness in spots numberless through the soft waving green. A few of the commonest flowers grew about the door, but there was no garden. The door-step was live rock, and a huge projecting rock behind formed the back and a portion of one of the end walls. This latter rock had been the attraction to the site, because of a hollow in it, which now served as a dairy. For up there with them lived the last cow of the valley—the cow that breathed the loftiest air on all Daurside—a good cow, and gifted in feeding well upon little. Facing the broad south, and leaning against the hill, as against the bosom of God, sheltering it from the north and east, the cottage looked so high-humble, so still, so confident, that it drew Gibbie with the spell of heart-likeness. He knocked at

the old, weather-beaten, shrunk and rent, but well patched door. A voice, alive with the soft vibrations of thought and feeling, answered,

"Come yer wa's in, whae'er ye be."

Gibbie pulled the string that came through a hole in the door, so lifting the latch, and entered.

A woman sat on a creepie, her face turned over her shoulder to see who came. It was a grey face, with good simple features and clear grey eyes. The plentiful hair that grew low on her forehead, was half grey, mostly covered by a white cap with frills. A clean wrapper and apron, both of blue print, over a blue winsey petticoat, blue stockings, and strong shoes completed her dress. A book lay on her lap: always when she had finished her morning's work, and made her house tidy, she sat down to have her comfort, as she called it. The moment she saw Gibbie she rose. Had he been the angel Gabriel, come to tell her she was wanted at the throne, her attention could not have been more immediate or thorough. She was rather a little woman, and carried herself straight and light.

"Eh, ye puir ootcast!" she said, in the pitying voice of a mother, "hoo cam ye here sic a hicht? Cratur, ye hae left the warl' ahin' ye. What wad ye hae here? I hae naething."

Receiving no answer but one of the child's betwitching smiles, she stood for a moment regarding him, not in mere silence, but with a look of dumbness. She was a mother. One who is mother only to her own children is not a mother; she is only a woman

who has borne children. But here was one of God's mothers.

Loneliness and silence, and constant homely familiarity with the vast simplicities of nature, assist much in the development of the deeper and more wonderful faculties of perception. The perceptions themselves may take this or that shape according to the education—may even embody themselves fantastically, yet be no less perceptions. Now the very moment before Gibbie entered, she had been reading the words of the Lord: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me"; and with her heart full of them, she lifted her eyes and saw Gibbie. For one moment, with the quick flashing response of the childlike imagination of the Celt, she fancied she saw the Lord himself. Another woman might have made a more serious mistake, and seen there only a child. Often had Janet pondered, as she sat alone on the great mountain, while Robert was with the sheep, or she lay awake by his side at night, with the wind howling about the cottage, whether the Lord might not sometimes take a lonely walk to look after such solitary sheep of his flock as they, and let them know he had not lost sight of them, for all the ups and downs of the hills. There stood the child, and whether he was the Lord or not, he was evidently hungry. Ah! who could tell but the Lord was actually hungry in every one of his hungering little ones!

In the mean time—only it was but thought-time, not clock-time—Gibbie stood motionless in the middle of the floor, smiling his innocent smile, asking for nothing, hinting at nothing,

but resting his wild calm eyes, with a sense of safety and mother-presence, upon the grey thoughtful face of the gazing woman. Her awe deepened; it seemed to descend upon her and fold her in as with a mantle. Involuntarily she bowed her head, and stepping to him took him by the hand, and led him to the stool she had left. There she made him sit, while she brought forward her table, white with scrubbing, took from a hole in the wall and set upon it a platter of oatcakes, carried a wooden bowl to her dairy in the rock through a whitewashed door, and bringing it back filled, half with cream half with milk, set that also on the table. Then she placed a chair before it, and said—

"Sit ye doon, an' tak. Gin ye war the Lord himsel', my bonny man, an' ye may be for oucht I ken, for ye luik puir an' despised eneuch, I cud gie nae better, for it's a' I hae to offer ye—'cep it micht be an egg," she added, correcting herself, and turned and went out.

Presently she came back with a look of success, carrying two eggs, which, having raked out a quantity, she buried in the hot ashes of the peats, and left in front of the hearth to roast, while Gibbie went on eating the thick oatcake, sweet and substantial, and drinking such milk as the wildest imagination of town-boy could never suggest. It was indeed angels' food—food such as would have pleased the Lord himself after a hard day with axe and saw and plane, so good and simple and strong was it. Janet resumed her seat on the low three-legged stool, and took her knitting that he might feel neither that he was watched as he ate,

nor that she was waiting for him to finish. Every other moment she gave a glance at the stranger she had taken in; but never a word he spoke, and the sense of mystery grew upon her.

Presently came a great bounce and scramble; the latch jumped up, the door flew open, and after a moment's pause, in came a sheep dog—a splendid thorough-bred collie, carrying in his mouth a tiny, long-legged lamb, which he dropped half dead in the woman's lap. It was a late lamb, born of a mother which had been sold from the hill, but had found her way back from a great distance, in order that her coming young one might have the privilege of being yeaned on the same spot where she had herself awaked to existence. Another moment, and her mba-a was heard approaching the door. She trotted in, and going up to Janet, stood contemplating the consequences of her maternal ambition. Her udder was full, but the lamb was too weak to suck. Janet rose, and going to the side of the room, opened the door of what might have seemed an old press, but was a bed. Folding back the counterpane, she laid the lamb in the bed, and covered it over. Then she got a caup, a wooden dish like a large saucer, and into it milked the ewe. Next she carried the caup to the bed; but what means she there used to enable the lamb to drink, the boy could not see, though his busy eyes and loving heart would gladly have taken in all.

In the mean time the collie, having done his duty by the lamb, and perhaps forgotten it, sat on his tail, and stared with his two brave trusting eyes at the little beggar that sat in the master's

chair, and ate of the fat of the land. Oscar was a gentleman, and had never gone to school, therefore neither fancied nor had been taught that rags make an essential distinction, and ought to be barked at. Gibbie was a stranger, and therefore as a stranger Oscar gave him welcome—now and then stooping to lick the little brown feet that had wandered so far.

Like all wild creatures, Gibbie ate fast, and had finished everything set before him ere the woman had done feeding the lamb. Without a notion of the rudeness of it, his heart full of gentle gratitude, he rose and left the cottage. When Janet turned from her shepherding, there sat Oscar looking up at the empty chair.

"What's come o' the laddie?" she said to the dog, who answered with a low whine, half-regretful, half-interrogative. It may be he was only asking, like Esau, if there was no residuum of blessing for him also; but perhaps he too was puzzled what to conclude about the boy. Janet hastened to the door, but already Gibbie's nimble feet refreshed to the point of every toe with the food he had just swallowed, had borne him far up the hill, behind the cottage, so that she could not get a glimpse of him. Thoughtfully she returned, and thoughtfully removed the remnants of the meal. She would then have resumed her Bible, but her hospitality had rendered it necessary that she should put on her girdle—not a cincture of leather upon her body, but a disc of iron on the fire, to bake thereon cakes ere her husband's return. It was a simple enough process, for the oat-meal wanted

nothing but water and fire; but her joints had not yet got rid of the winter's rheumatism, and the labour of the baking was the hardest part of the sacrifice of her hospitality. To many it is easy to give what they have, but the offering of weariness and pain is never easy. They are indeed a true salt to salt sacrifices withal. That it was the last of her meal till her youngest boy should bring her a bag on his back from the mill the next Saturday, made no point in her trouble.

When at last she had done, and put the things away, and swept up the hearth, she milked the ewe, sent her out to nibble, took her Bible, and sat down once more to read. The lamb lay at her feet, with his little head projecting from the folds of her new flannel petticoat; and every time her eye fell from the book upon the lamb, she felt as if somehow the lamb was the boy that had eaten of her bread and drunk of her milk. After she had read a while, there came a change, and the lamb seemed the Lord himself, both lamb and shepherd, who had come to claim her hospitality. Then, divinely invaded with the dread lest in the fancy she should forget the reality, she kneeled down and prayed to the friend of Martha and Mary and Lazarus, to come as he had said, and sup with her indeed.

Not for years and years had Janet been to church; she had long been unable to walk so far; and having no book but the best, and no help to understand it but the highest, her faith was simple, strong, real, all-pervading. Day by day she pored over the great gospel—I mean just the good news according to

Matthew and Mark and Luke and John—until she had grown to be one of the noble ladies of the kingdom of heaven—one of those who inherit the earth, and are ripening to see God. For the Master, and his mind in hers, was her teacher. She had little or no theology save what he taught her, or rather, what he is. And of any other than that, the less the better; for no theology, except the Theou logos, {compilers note: spelled in Greek: Theta, Epsilon, Omicron, Upsilon; Lambda, Omicron with stress, Gamma, Omicron, Sigma} is worth the learning, no other being true. To know him is to know God. And he only who obeys him, does or can know him; he who obeys him cannot fail to know him. To Janet, Jesus Christ was no object of so-called theological speculation, but a living man, who somehow or other heard her when she called to him, and sent her the help she needed.

CHAPTER XII.
GLASHGAR

Up and up the hill went Gibbie. The path ceased altogether; but when up is the word in one's mind—and up had grown almost a fixed idea with Gibbie—he can seldom be in doubt whether he is going right, even where there is no track. Indeed in all more arduous ways, men leave no track behind them, no finger-post—there is always but the steepness. He climbed and climbed. The mountain grew steeper and barer as he went, and he became absorbed in his climbing. All at once he discovered that he had lost the stream, where or when he could not tell. All below and around him was red granite rock, scattered over with the chips and splinters detached by air and wind, water and stream, light and heat and cold. Glashgar was only about three thousand feet in height, but it was the steepest of its group—a huge rock that, even in the midst of masses, suggested solidity.

Not once while he ascended had the idea come to him that by and by he should be able to climb no farther. For aught he knew there were oat-cakes and milk and sheep and collie dogs ever higher and higher still. Not until he actually stood upon the peak did he know that there was the earthly hitherto—the final obstacle of unobstancy, the everywhere which, from excess of perviousness, was to human foot impervious. The sun was

about two hours towards the west, when Gibbie, his little legs almost as active as ever, surmounted the final slope. Running up like a child that would scale heaven he stood on the bare round, the head of the mountain, and saw, with an invading shock of amazement, and at first of disappointment, that there was no going higher: in every direction the slope was downward. He had never been on the top of anything before. He had always been in the hollows of things. Now the whole world lay beneath him. It was cold; in some of the shadows lay snow—weary exile from both the sky and the sea and the ways of them—captive in the fetters of the cold—prisoner to the mountain top; but Gibbie felt no cold. In a glow with the climb, which at the last had been hard, his lungs filled with the heavenly air, and his soul with the feeling that he was above everything that was, uplifted on the very crown of the earth, he stood in his rags, a fluttering scarecrow, the conqueror of height, the discoverer of immensity, the monarch of space. Nobody knew of such marvel but him! Gibbie had never even heard the word poetry, but none the less was he the very stuff out of which poems grow, and now all the latent poetry in him was set a swaying and heaving—an ocean inarticulate because unobstructed—a might that could make no music, no thunder of waves, because it had no shore, no rocks of thought against which to break in speech. He sat down on the topmost point; and slowly, in the silence and the loneliness, from the unknown fountains of the eternal consciousness, the heart of the child filled. Above him towered infinitude, immensity, potent

on his mind through shape to his eye in a soaring dome of blue —the one visible symbol informed and insouled of the eternal, to reveal itself thereby. In it, centre and life, lorded the great sun, beginning to cast shadows to the south and east from the endless heaps of the world, that lifted themselves in all directions. Down their sides ran the streams, down busily, hasting away through every valley to the Daur, which bore them back to the ocean-heart—through woods and meadows, park and waste, rocks and willowy marsh. Behind the valleys rose mountains; and behind the mountains, other mountains, more and more, each swathed in its own mystery; and beyond all hung the curtain-depth of the sky-gulf. Gibbie sat and gazed, and dreamed and gazed. The mighty city that had been to him the universe, was dropped and lost, like a thing that was now nobody's, in far indistinguishable distance; and he who had lost it had climbed upon the throne of the world. The air was still; when a breath awoke, it but touched his cheek like the down of a feather, and the stillness was there again. The stillness grew great, and slowly descended upon him. It deepened and deepened. Surely it would deepen to a voice!—it was about to speak! It was as if a great single thought was the substance of the silence, and was all over and around him, and closer to him than his clothes, than his body, than his hands. I am describing the indescribable, and compelled to make it too definite for belief. In colder speech, an experience had come to the child; a link in the chain of his development glided over the windlass of his uplifting; a change passed upon him. In after

years, when Gibbie had the idea of God, when he had learned to think about him, to desire his presence, to believe that a will of love enveloped his will, as the brooding hen spreads her wings over her eggs—as often as the thought of God came to him, it came in the shape of the silence on the top of Glashgar.

As he sat, with his eyes on the peak he had just chosen from the rest as the loftiest of all within his sight, he saw a cloud begin to grow upon it. The cloud grew, and gathered, and descended, covering its sides as it went, until the whole was hidden. Then swiftly, as he gazed, the cloud opened as it were a round window in the heart of it, and through that he saw the peak again. The next moment a flash of blue lightning darted across the opening, and whether Gibbie really saw what follows, he never could be sure, but always after, as often as the vision returned, in the flash he saw a rock rolling down the peak. The clouds swept together, and the window closed. The next thing which in after years he remembered was, that the earth, mountains, meadows, and streams, had vanished; everything was gone from his sight, except a few yards around him of the rock upon which he sat, and the cloud that hid world and heaven. Then again burst forth the lightning. He saw no flash, but an intense cloud-illumination, accompanied by the deafening crack, and followed by the appalling roar and roll of the thunder. Nor was it noise alone that surrounded him, for, as if he were in the heart and nest of the storm, the very wind-waves that made the thunder rushed in driven bellowing over him, and had nearly swept him away.

He clung to the rock with hands and feet. The cloud writhed and wrought and billowed and eddied, with all the shapes of the wind, and seemed itself to be the furnace-womb in which the thunder was created. Was this then the voice into which the silence had been all the time deepening?—had the Presence thus taken form and declared itself? Gibbie had yet to learn that there is a deeper voice still into which such a silence may grow—and the silence not be broken. He was not dismayed. He had no conscience of wrong, and scarcely knew fear. It was an awful delight that filled his spirit. Mount Sinai was not to him a terror. To him there was no wrath in the thunder any more than in the greeting of the dog that found him in his kennel. To him there was no being in the sky so righteous as to be more displeased than pitiful over the wrongness of the children whom he had not yet got taught their childhood. Gibbie sat calm, awe-ful, but, I imagine, with a clear forehead and smile-haunted mouth, while the storm roared and beat and flashed and ran about him. It was the very fountain of tempest. From the bare crest of the mountain the water poured down its sides, as if its springs were in the rock itself, and not in the bosom of the cloud above. The tumult at last seized Gibbie like an intoxication; he jumped to his feet, and danced and flung his arms about, as if he himself were the storm. But the uproar did not last long. Almost suddenly it was gone, as if, like a bird that had been flapping the ground in agony, it had at last recovered itself, and taken to its great wings and flown. The sun shone out clear, and in all the blue abyss not a cloud was

to be seen, except far away to leeward, where one was spread like a banner in the lonely air, fleeting away, the ensign of the charging storm—bearing for its device a segment of the many-coloured bow.

And now that its fierceness was over, the jubilation in the softer voices of the storm became audible. As the soul gives thanks for the sufferings that are overpast, offering the love and faith and hope which the pain has stung into fresh life, so from the sides of the mountain ascended the noise of the waters the cloud had left behind. The sun had kept on his journey; the storm had been no disaster to him; and now he was a long way down the west, and Twilight, in her grey cloak, would soon be tracking him from the east, like sorrow dogging delight. Gibbie, wet and cold, began to think of the cottage where he had been so kindly received, of the friendly face of its mistress, and her care of the lamb. It was not that he wanted to eat. He did not even imagine more eating, for never in his life had he eaten twice of the same charity in the same day. What he wanted was to find some dry hole in the mountain, and sleep as near the cottage as he could. So he rose and set out. But he lost his way; came upon one precipice after another, down which only a creeping thing could have gone; was repeatedly turned aside by torrents and swampy places; and when the twilight came, was still wandering upon the mountain. At length he found, as he thought, the burn along whose bank he had ascended in the morning, and followed it towards the valley, looking out for the friendly cottage. But the first indication of

abode he saw, was the wall of the grounds of the house through whose gate he had looked in the morning. He was then a long way from the cottage, and not far from the farm; and the best thing he could do was to find again the barn where he had slept so well the night before. This was not very difficult even in the dusky night. He skirted the wall, came to his first guide, found and crossed the valley-stream, and descended it until he thought he recognized the slope of clover down which he had run in the morning. He ran up the brae, and there were the solemn cones of the corn-ricks between him and the sky! A minute more and he had crept through the cat-hole, and was feeling about in the dark barn. Happily the heap of straw was not yet removed. Gibbie shot into it like a mole, and burrowed to the very centre, there coiled himself up, and imagined himself lying in the heart of the rock on which he sat during the storm, and listening to the thunder winds over his head. The fancy enticed the sleep which before was ready enough to come, and he was soon far stiller than Ariel in the cloven pine of Sycorax.

CHAPTER XIII.
THE CEILING

He might have slept longer the next morning, for there was no threshing to wake him, in spite of the cocks in the yard that made it their business to rouse sleepers to their work, had it not been for another kind of cock inside him, which bore the same relation to food that the others bore to light. He peeped first, then crept out. All was still except the voices of those same prophet cocks, crying in the wilderness of the yet sunless world; a moo now and then from the byres; and the occasional stamp of a great hoof in the stable. Gibbie clambered up into the loft, and turning the cheeses about until he came upon the one he had gnawed before, again attacked it, and enlarged considerably the hole he had already made in it. Rather dangerous food it was, perhaps, eaten in that unmitigated way, for it was made of skimmed milk, and was very dry and hard; but Gibbie was a powerful little animal, all bones and sinews, small hard muscle, and faultless digestion. The next idea naturally rising was the burn; he tumbled down over the straw heap to the floor of the barn, and made for the cat-hole. But the moment he put his head out, he saw the legs of a man: the farmer was walking through his ricks, speculating on the money they held. He drew back, and looked round to see where best he could betake himself should he come

in. He spied thereupon a ladder leaning against the end-wall of the barn, opposite the loft and the stables, and near it in the wall a wooden shutter, like the door of a little cupboard. He got up the ladder, and opening the shutter, which was fastened only with a button, found a hole in the wall, through which popping his head too carelessly, he knocked from a shelf some piece of pottery, which fell with a great crash on a paved floor. Looking after it, Gibbie beheld below him a rich prospect of yellow-white pools ranged in order on shelves. They reminded him of milk, but were of a different colour. As he gazed, a door opened hastily, with sharp clicking latch, and a woman entered, ejaculating, "Care what set that cat!" Gibbie drew back, lest in her search for the cat she might find the culprit. She looked all round, muttering such truncated imprecations as befitted the mouth of a Scotchwoman; but as none of her milk was touched, her wrath gradually abated: she picked up the fragments and withdrew.

Thereupon Gibbie ventured to reconnoitre a little farther, and popping in his head again, saw that the dairy was open to the roof, but the door was in a partition which did not run so high. The place from which the woman entered, was ceiled, and the ceiling rested on the partition between it and the dairy; so that, from a shelf level with the hole, he could easily enough get on the top of the ceiling. This, urged by the instinct of the homeless to understand their surroundings, he presently effected, by creeping like a cat along the top shelf.

The ceiling was that of the kitchen, and was merely of

boards, which, being old and shrunken, had here and there a considerable crack between two, and Gibbie, peeping through one after another of these cracks, soon saw several things he did not understand. Of such was a barrel-churn, which he took for a barrel-organ, and welcomed as a sign of civilization. The woman was sweeping the room towards the hearth, where the peat fire was already burning, with a great pot hanging over it, covered with a wooden lid. When the water in it was hot, she poured it into a large wooden dish, in which she began to wash other dishes, thus giving the observant Gibbie his first notion of housekeeping. Then she scoured the deal table, dusted the bench and the chairs, arranged the dishes on shelves and rack, except a few which she placed on the table, put more water on the fire, and disappeared in the dairy. Thence presently she returned, carrying a great jar, which, to Gibbie's astonishment, having lifted a lid in the top of the churn, she emptied into it; he was not, therefore, any farther astonished, when she began to turn the handle vigorously, that no music issued. As to what else might be expected, Gibbie had not even a mistaken idea. But the butter came quickly that morning, and then he did have another astonishment, for he saw a great mass of something half-solid tumbled out where he had seen a liquid poured in—nor that alone, for the liquid came out again too! But when at length he saw the mass, after being well washed, moulded into certain shapes, he recognized it as butter, such as he had seen in the shops, and had now and then tasted on the piece given him by some more than usually generous housekeeper.

Surely he had wandered into a region of plenty! Only now, when he saw the woman busy and careful, the idea of things in the country being a sort of common property began to fade from his mind, and the perception to wake that they were as the things in the shops, which must not be touched without first paying money for them over a counter.

The butter-making, brought to a successful close, the woman proceeded to make porridge for the men's breakfast, and with hungry eyes Gibbie watched that process next. The water in the great pot boiling like a wild volcano, she took handful after handful of meal from a great wooden dish, called a bossie, and threw it into the pot, stirring as she threw, until the mess was presently so thick that she could no more move the spurtle in it; and scarcely had she emptied it into another great wooden bowl, called a bicker, when Gibbie heard the heavy tramp of the men crossing the yard to consume it.

For the last few minutes, Gibbie's nostrils—alas! not Gibbie—had been regaled with the delicious odour of the boiling meal; and now his eyes had their turn—but still, alas, not Gibbie! Prostrate on the ceiling he lay and watched the splendid spoonfuls tumble out of sight into the capacious throats of four men; all took their spoonfuls from the same dish, but each dipped his spoonful into his private caup of milk, ere he carried it to his mouth. A little apart sat a boy, whom the woman seemed to favour, having provided him with a plateful of porridge by himself, but the fact was, four were as many as could

bicker comfortably, or with any chance of fair play. The boy's countenance greatly attracted Gibbie. It was a long, solemn face, but the eyes were bright-blue and sparkling; and when he smiled, which was not very often, it was a good and meaningful smile.

When the meal was over, and he saw the little that was left, with all the drops of milk from the caups, tumbled into a common receptacle, to be kept, he thought, for the next meal, poor Gibbie felt very empty and forsaken. He crawled away sad at heart, with nothing before him except a drink of water at the burn. He might have gone to the door of the house, in the hope of a bit of cake, but now that he had seen something of the doings in the house and of the people who lived in it—as soon, that is, as he had looked embodied ownership in the face—he began to be aware of its claims, and the cheese he had eaten to lie heavy upon his spiritual stomach; he had done that which he would not have done before leaving the city. Carefully he crept across the ceiling, his head hanging, like a dog scolded of his master, carefully along the shelf of the dairy, and through the opening in the wall, quickly down the ladder, and through the cat-hole in the barn door. There was no one in the corn-yard now, and he wandered about among the ricks looking, with little hope, for something to eat. Turning a corner he came upon a hen-house—and there was a crowd of hens and half-grown chickens about the very dish into which he had seen the remnants of the breakfast thrown, all pecking billfuls out of it. As I may have said before, he always felt at liberty to share with the animals, partly, I suppose, because he

saw they had no scrupulosity or ceremony amongst themselves; so he dipped his hand into the dish: why should not the bird of the air now and then peck with the more respectable of the barn-door, if only to learn his inferiority? Greatly refreshed, he got up from among the hens, scrambled over the dry stone-wall, and trotted away to the burn.

CHAPTER XIV.
HORNIE

It was now time he should resume his journey up Daurside, and he set out to follow the burn that he might regain the river. It led him into a fine meadow, where a number of cattle were feeding. The meadow was not fenced—little more than marked off, indeed, upon one side, from a field of growing corn, by a low wall of earth, covered with moss and grass and flowers. The cattle were therefore herded by a boy, whom Gibbie recognized even in the distance as him by whose countenance he had been so much attracted when, like an old deity on a cloud, he lay spying through the crack in the ceiling. The boy was reading a book, from which every now and then he lifted his eyes to glance around him, and see whether any of the cows or heifers or stirks were wandering beyond their pasture of rye-grass and clover. Having them all before him, therefore no occasion to look behind, he did not see Gibbie approaching. But as soon as he seemed thoroughly occupied, a certain black cow, with short sharp horns and a wicked look, which had been gradually, as was her wont, edging nearer and nearer to the corn, turned suddenly and ran for it, jumped the dyke, and plunging into a mad revelry of greed, tore and devoured with all the haste not merely of one insecure, but of one that knew she was stealing. Now Gibbie

had been observant enough during his travels to learn that this was against the law and custom of the country—that it was not permitted to a cow to go into a field where there were no others—and like a shot he was after the black marauder. The same instant the herd boy too, lifting his eyes from his book, saw her, and springing to his feet, caught up his great stick, and ran also: he had more than one reason to run, for he understood only too well the dangerous temper of the cow, and saw that Gibbie was a mere child, and unarmed—an object most provocative of attack to Hornie—so named, indeed, because of her readiness to use the weapons with which Nature had provided her. She was in fact a malicious cow, and but that she was a splendid milker, would have been long ago fatted up and sent to the butcher. The boy as he ran full speed to the rescue, kept shouting to warn Gibbie from his purpose, but Gibbie was too intent to understand the sounds he uttered, and supposed them addressed to the cow. With the fearless service that belonged to his very being, he ran straight at Hornie, and, having nothing to strike her with, flung himself against her with a great shove towards the dyke. Hornie, absorbed in her delicious robbery, neither heard nor saw before she felt him, and, startled by the sudden attack, turned tail. It was but for a moment. In turning, she caught sight of her ruler, sceptre in hand, at some little distance, and turned again, either to have another mouthful, or in the mere instinct to escape him. Then she caught sight of the insignificant object that had scared her, and in contemptuous indignation lowered her head between her

forefeet, and was just making a rush at Gibbie, when a stone struck her on a horn, and the next moment the herd came up, and with a storm of fiercest blows, delivered with the full might of his arm, drove her in absolute rout back into the meadow. Drawing himself up in the unconscious majesty of success, Donal Grant looked down upon Gibbie, but with eyes of admiration.

"Haith, cratur!" he said, "ye're mair o' a man nor ye'll luik this saven year! What garred ye rin upo' the deevil's verra horns that gait?"

Gibbie stood smiling.

"Gien't hadna been for my club we wad baith be owre the mune 'gain this time. What ca' they ye, man?"

Still Gibbie only smiled.

"Whaur come ye frae?—Wha's yer fowk?—Whaur div ye bide?—Haena ye a tongue i' yer heid, ye rascal?"

Gibbie burst out laughing, and his eyes sparkled and shone: he was delighted with the herd-boy, and it was so long since he had heard human speech addressed to himself!

"The cratur's feel (foolish)!" concluded Donal to himself pityingly. "Puir thing! puir thing!" he added aloud, and laid his hand on Gibbie's head.

It was but the second touch of kindness Gibbie had received since he was the dog's guest: had he been acquainted with the bastard emotion of self-pity, he would have wept; as he was unaware of hardship in his lot, discontent in his heart, or discord in his feeling, his emotion was one of unmingled delight, and

embodied itself in a perfect smile.

"Come, cratur, an' I'll gie ye a piece: ye'll aiblins un'erstan' that!" said Donal, as he turned to leave the corn for the grass, where Hornie was eating with the rest like the most innocent of hum'le (hornless) animals. Gibbie obeyed, and followed, as, with slow step and downbent face, Donal led the way. For he had tucked his club under his arm, and already his greedy eyes were fixed on the book he had carried all the time, nor did he take them from it until, followed in full and patient content by Gibbie, he had almost reached the middle of the field, some distance from Hornie and her companions, when, stopping abruptly short, he began without lifting his head to cast glances on this side and that.

"I houp nane o' them's swallowed my nepkin!" he said musingly. "I'm no sure whaur I was sittin'. I hae my place i' the beuk, but I doobt I hae tint my place i' the gerse."

Long before he had ended, for he spoke with utter deliberation, Gibbie was yards away, flitting hither and thither like a butterfly. A minute more and Donal saw him pounce upon his bundle, which he brought to him in triumph.

"Fegs! ye're no the gowk I took ye for," said Donal meditatively.

Whether Gibbie took the remark for a compliment, or merely was gratified that Donal was pleased, the result was a merry laugh.

The bundle had in it a piece of hard cheese, such as Gibbie

had already made acquaintance with, and a few quarters of cakes. One of these Donal broke in two, gave Gibbie the half, replaced the other, and sat down again to his book—this time with his back against the fell-dyke dividing the grass from the corn. Gibbie seated himself, like a Turk, with his bare legs crossed under him, a few yards off, where, in silence and absolute content, he ate his piece, and gravely regarded him. His human soul had of late been starved, even more than his body—and that from no fastidiousness; and it was paradise again to be in such company. Never since his father's death had he looked on a face that drew him as Donal's. It was fair of complexion by nature, but the sun had burned it brown, and it was covered with freckles. Its forehead was high, with a mass of foxy hair over it, and under it two keen hazel eyes, in which the green predominated over the brown. Its nose was long and solemn, over his well-made mouth, which rarely smiled, but not unfrequently trembled with emotion —over his book. For age, Donal was getting towards fifteen, and was strongly built, and well grown. A general look of honesty, and an attractive expression of reposeful friendliness pervaded his whole appearance. Conscientious in regard to his work, he was yet in danger of forgetting his duty for minutes together in his book. The chief evil that resulted from it was such an occasional inroad on the corn as had that morning taken place; and many were Donal's self-reproaches ere he got to sleep when that had fallen out during the day. He knew his master would threaten him with dismissal if he came upon him reading in the field, but he

knew also his master was well aware that he did read, and that it was possible to read and yet herd well. It was easy enough in this same meadow: on one side ran the Lorrie; on another was a stone wall; and on the third a ditch; only the cornfield lay virtually unprotected, and there he had to be himself the boundary. And now he sat leaning against the dyke, as if he held so a position of special defence; but he knew well enough that the dullest calf could outflank him, and invade, for a few moments at the least, the forbidden pleasure-ground. He had gained an ally, however, whose faculty and faithfulness he little knew yet. For Gibbie had begun to comprehend the situation. He could not comprehend why or how anyone should be absorbed in a book, for all he knew of books was from his one morning of dame-schooling; but he could comprehend that, if one's attention were so occupied, it must be a great vex to be interrupted continually by the ever-waking desires of his charge after dainties. Therefore, as Donal watched his book, Gibbie for Donal's sake watched the herd, and, as he did so, gently possessed himself of Donal's club. Nor had many minutes passed before Donal, raising his head to look, saw the curst cow again in the green corn, and Gibbie manfully encountering her with the club, hitting her hard upon head and horns, and deftly avoiding every rush she made at him.

"Gie her't upo' the nose," Donal shouted in terror, as he ran full speed to his aid, abusing Hornie in terms of fiercest vituperation.

But he needed not have been so apprehensive. Gibbie heard

and obeyed, and the next moment Hornie had turned tail and was fleeing back to the safety of the lawful meadow.

"Hech, cratur! but ye maun be come o' fechtin' fowk!" said Donal, regarding him with fresh admiration.

Gibbie laughed; but he had been sorely put to it, and the big drops were coursing fast down his sweet face. Donal took the club from him, and rushing at Hornie, belaboured her well, and drove her quite to the other side of the field. He then returned and resumed his book, while Gibbie again sat down near by, and watched both Donal and his charge—the keeper of both herd and cattle. Surely Gibbie had at last found his vocation on Daurside, with both man and beast for his special care!

By and by Donal raised his head once more, but this time it was to regard Gibbie and not the nowt. It had gradually sunk into him that the appearance and character of the cratur were peculiar. He had regarded him as a little tramp, whose people were not far off, and who would soon get tired of herding and rejoin his companions; but while he read, a strange feeling of the presence of the boy had, in spite of the witchery of his book, been growing upon him. He seemed to feel his eyes without seeing them; and when Gibbie rose to look how the cattle were distributed, he became vaguely uneasy lest the boy should be going away. For already he had begun to feel him a humble kind of guardian angel. He had already that day, through him, enjoyed a longer spell of his book, than any day since he had been herd at the Mains of Glashruach. And now the desire had come to

regard him more closely.

For a minute or two he sat and gazed at him. Gibbie gazed at him in return, and in his eyes the herd-boy looked the very type of power and gentleness. How he admired even his suit of small-ribbed, greenish-coloured corduroy, the ribs much rubbed and obliterated! Then his jacket had round brass buttons! his trousers had patches instead of holes at the knees! their short legs revealed warm woollen stockings! and his shoes had their soles full of great broad-headed iron tacks! while on his head he had a small round blue bonnet with a red tuft! The little outcast, on the other hand, with his loving face and pure clear eyes, bidding fair to be naked altogether before long, woke in Donal a divine pity, a tenderness like that nestling at the heart of womanhood. The neglected creature could surely have no mother to shield him from frost and wind and rain. But a strange thing was, that out of this pitiful tenderness seemed to grow, like its blossom, another unlike feeling—namely, that he was in the presence of a being of some order superior to his own, one to whom he would have to listen if he spoke, who knew more than he would tell. But then Donal was a Celt, and might be a poet, and the sweet stillness of the child's atmosphere made things bud in his imagination.

My reader must think how vastly, in all his poverty, Donal was Gibbie's superior in the social scale. He earned his own food and shelter, and nearly four pounds a year besides; lived as well as he could wish, dressed warm, was able for his work, and imagined it no hardship. Then he had a father and mother whom he went

to see every Saturday, and of whom he was as proud as son could be—a father who was the priest of the family, and fed sheep; a mother who was the prophetess, and kept the house ever an open refuge for her children. Poor Gibbie earned nothing—never had earned more than a penny at a time in his life, and had never dreamed of having a claim to such penny. Nobody seemed to care for him, give him anything, do anything for him. Yet there he sat before Donal's eyes, full of service, of smiles, of contentment.

Donal took up his book, but laid it down again and gazed at Gibbie. Several times he tried to return to his reading, but as often resumed his contemplation of the boy. At length it struck him as something more than shyness would account for, that he had not yet heard a word from the lips of the child, even when running after the cows. He must watch him more closely.

By this it was his dinner time. Again he untied his handkerchief, and gave Gibbie what he judged a fair share for his bulk—namely about a third of the whole. Philosopher as he was, however, he could not help sighing a little when he got to the end of his diminished portion. But he was better than comforted when Gibbie offered him all that yet remained to him; and the smile with which he refused it made Gibbie as happy as a prince would like to be. What a day it had been for Gibbie! A whole human being, and some five and twenty four-legged creatures besides, to take care of!

After their dinner, Donal gravitated to his book, and Gibbie resumed the executive. Some time had passed when Donal,

glancing up, saw Gibbie lying flat on his chest, staring at something in the grass. He slid himself quietly nearer, and discovered it was a daisy—one by itself alone; there were not many in the field. Like a mother leaning over her child, he was gazing at it. The daisy was not a cold white one, neither was it a red one; it was just a perfect daisy: it looked as if some gentle hand had taken it, while it slept and its star points were all folded together, and dipped them—just a tiny touchy dip, in a molten ruby, so that, when it opened again, there was its crown of silver pointed with rubies all about its golden sun-heart.

"He's been readin' Burns!" said Donal. He forgot that the daisies were before Burns, and that he himself had loved them before ever he heard of him. Now, he had not heard of Chaucer, who made love to the daisies four hundred years before Burns.—God only knows what gospellers they have been on his middle-earth. All its days his daisies have been coming and going, and they are not old yet, nor have worn out yet their lovely garments, though they patch and darn just as little as they toil and spin.

"Can ye read, cratur?" asked Donal.

Gibbie shook his head.

"Canna ye speyk, man?"

Again Gibbie shook his head.

"Can ye hear?"

Gibbie burst out laughing. He knew that he heard better than other people.

"Hearken till this than," said Donal.

He took his book from the grass, and read, in a chant, or rather in a lilt, the Danish ballad of Chyld Dyring, as translated by Sir Walter Scott. Gibbie's eyes grew wider and wider as he listened; their pupils dilated, and his lips parted: it seemed as if his soul were looking out of door and windows at once—but a puzzled soul that understood nothing of what it saw. Yet plainly, either the sounds, or the thought-matter vaguely operative beyond the line where intelligence begins, or, it may be, the sparkle of individual word or phrase islanded in a chaos of rhythmic motion, wrought somehow upon him, for his attention was fixed as by a spell. When Donal ceased, he remained open-mouthed and motionless for a time; then, drawing himself slidingly over the grass to Donal's feet, he raised his head and peeped above his knees at the book. A moment only he gazed, and drew back with a hungry sigh: he had seen nothing in the book like what Donal had been drawing from it—as if one should look into the well of which he had just drunk, and see there nothing but dry pebbles and sand! The wind blew gentle, the sun shone bright, all nature closed softly round the two, and the soul whose children they were was nearer than the one to the other, nearer than sun or wind or daisy or Chyld Dyring. To his amazement, Donal saw the tears gathering in Gibbie's eyes. He was as one who gazes into the abyss of God's will—sees only the abyss, cannot see the will, and weeps. The child in whom neither cold nor hunger nor nakedness nor loneliness could move a throb of self-pity, was moved to tears that a loveliness, to him strange and unintelligible, had passed

away, and he had no power to call it back.

"Wad ye like to hear't again?" asked Donal, more than half understanding him instinctively.

Gibbie's face answered with a flash, and Donal read the poem again, and Gibbie's delight returned greater than before, for now something like a dawn began to appear among the cloudy words. Donal read it a third time, and closed the book, for it was almost the hour for driving the cattle home. He had never yet seen, and perhaps never again did see, such a look of thankful devotion on human countenance as met his lifted eyes.

How much Gibbie even then understood of the lovely eerie old ballad, it is impossible for me to say. Had he a glimmer of the return of the buried mother? Did he think of his own? I doubt if he had ever thought that he had a mother; but he may have associated the tale with his father, and the boots he was always making for him. Certainly it was the beginning of much. But the waking up of a human soul to know itself in the mirror of its thoughts and feelings, its loves and delights, oppresses me with so heavy a sense of marvel and inexplicable mystery, that when I imagine myself such as Gibbie then was, I cannot imagine myself coming awake. I can hardly believe that, from being such as Gibbie was the hour before he heard the ballad, I should ever have come awake. Yet here I am, capable of pleasure unspeakable from that and many another ballad, old and new! somehow, at one time or another, or at many times in one, I have at last come awake! When, by slow filmy unveilings, life grew clearer

to Gibbie, and he not only knew, but knew that he knew, his thoughts always went back to that day in the meadow with Donal Grant as the beginning of his knowledge of beautiful things in the world of man. Then first he saw nature reflected, Narcissus-like, in the mirror of her humanity, her highest self. But when or how the change in him began, the turn of the balance, the first push towards life of the evermore invisible germ—of that he remained, much as he wondered, often as he searched his consciousness, as ignorant to the last as I am now. Sometimes he was inclined to think the glory of the new experience must have struck him dazed, and that was why he could not recall what went on in him at the time.

Donal rose and went driving the cattle home, and Gibbie lay where he had again thrown himself upon the grass. When he lifted his head, Donal and the cows had vanished.

Donal had looked all round as he left the meadow, and seeing the boy nowhere, had concluded he had gone to his people. The impression he had made upon him faded a little during the evening. For when he reached home, and had watered them, he had to tie up the animals, each in its stall, and make it comfortable for the night; next, eat his own supper; then learn a proposition of Euclid, and go to bed.

CHAPTER XV.
DONAL GRANT

Hungering minds come of peasant people as often as of any, and have appeared in Scotland as often, I fancy, as in any nation; not every Scotsman, therefore, who may not himself have known one like Donal, will refuse to believe in such a herd-laddie. Besides, there are still those in Scotland, as well as in other nations, to whom the simple and noble, not the commonplace and selfish, is the true type of humanity. Of such as Donal, whether English or Scotch, is the class coming up to preserve the honour and truth of our Britain, to be the oil of the lamp of her life, when those who place her glory in knowledge, or in riches, shall have passed from her history as the smoke from her chimneys.

Cheap as education then was in Scotland, the parents of Donal Grant had never dreamed of sending a son to college. It was difficult for them to save even the few quarterly shillings that paid the fees of the parish schoolmaster: for Donal, indeed, they would have failed even in this, but for the help his brothers and sisters afforded. After he left school, however, and got a place as herd, he fared better than any of the rest, for at the Mains he found a friend and helper in Fergus Duff, his master's second son, who was then at home from college, which he had now attended two winters. Partly that he was delicate in health, partly that he

was something of a fine gentleman, he took no share with his father and elder brother in the work of the farm, although he was at the Mains from the beginning of April to the end of October. He was a human kind of soul notwithstanding, and would have been much more of a man if he had thought less of being a gentleman. He had taken a liking to Donal, and having found in him a strong desire after every kind of knowledge of which he himself had any share, had sought to enliven the tedium of an existence rendered not a little flabby from want of sufficient work, by imparting to him of the treasures he had gathered. They were not great, and he could never have carried him far, for he was himself only a respectable student, not a little lacking in perseverance, and given to dreaming dreams of which he was himself the hero. Happily, however, Donal was of another sort, and from the first needed but to have the outermost shell of a thing broken for him, and that Fergus could do: by and by Donal would break a shell for himself.

But perhaps the best thing Fergus did for him was the lending him books. Donal had an altogether unappeasable hunger after every form of literature with which he had as yet made acquaintance, and this hunger Fergus fed with the books of the house, and many besides of such as he purchased or borrowed for his own reading—these last chiefly poetry. But Fergus Duff, while he revelled in the writings of certain of the poets of the age, was incapable of finding poetry for himself in the things around him: Donal Grant, on the other hand, while he seized on

the poems Fergus lent him, with an avidity even greater than his, received from the nature around him influences similar to those which exhaled from the words of the poet. In some sense, then, Donal was original; that is, he received at first hand what Fergus required to have "put on" him, to quote Celia, in As you like it, "as pigeons feed their young." Therefore, fiercely as it would have harrowed the pride of Fergus to be informed of the fact, he was in the kingdom of art only as one who ate of what fell from the table, while his father's herd-boy was one of the family. This was as far from Donal's thought, however, as from that of Fergus; the condescension, therefore, of the latter did not impair the gratitude for which the former had such large reason; and Donal looked up to Fergus as to one of the lords of the world.

To find himself now in the reversed relation of superior and teacher to the little outcast, whose whole worldly having might be summed in the statement that he was not absolutely naked, woke in Donal an altogether new and strange feeling; yet gratitude to his master had but turned itself round, and become tenderness to his pupil.

After Donal left him in the field, and while he was ministering, first to his beasts and then to himself, Gibbie lay on the grass, as happy as child could well be. A loving hand laid on his feet or legs would have found them like ice; but where was the matter so long as he never thought of them? He could have supped a huge bicker of sowens, and eaten a dozen potatoes; but of what mighty consequence is hunger, so long as it neither absorbs the thought,

nor causes faintness? The sun, however, was going down behind a great mountain, and its huge shadow, made of darkness, and haunted with cold, came sliding across the river, and over valley and field, nothing staying its silent wave, until it covered Gibbie with the blanket of the dark, under which he could not long forget that he was in a body to which cold is unfriendly. At the first breath of the night-wind that came after the shadow, he shivered, and starting to his feet, began to trot, increasing his speed until he was scudding up and down the field like a wild thing of the night, whose time was at hand, waiting until the world should lie open to him. Suddenly he perceived that the daisies, which all day long had been full-facing the sun, like true souls confessing to the father of them, had folded their petals together to points, and held them like spear-heads tipped with threatening crimson, against the onset of the night and her shadows, while within its white cone each folded in the golden heart of its life, until the great father should return, and, shaking the wicked out of the folds of the night, render the world once more safe with another glorious day. Gibbie gazed and wondered; and while he gazed —slowly, glidingly, back to his mind came the ghost-mother of the ballad, and in every daisy he saw her folding her neglected orphans to her bosom, while the darkness and the misery rolled by defeated. He wished he knew a ghost that would put her arms round him. He must have had a mother once, he supposed, but he could not remember her, and of course she must have forgotten him. He did not know that about him were folded the everlasting

arms of the great, the one Ghost, which is the Death of death —the life and soul of all things and all thoughts. The Presence, indeed, was with him, and he felt it, but he knew it only as the wind and shadow, the sky and closed daisies: in all these things and the rest it took shape that it might come near him. Yea, the Presence was in his very soul, else he could never have rejoiced in friend, or desired ghost to mother him: still he knew not the Presence. But it was drawing nearer and nearer to his knowledge —even in sun and air and night and cloud, in beast and flower and herd-boy, until at last it would reveal itself to him, in him, as Life Himself. Then the man would know that in which the child had rejoiced. The stars came out, to Gibbie the heavenly herd, feeding at night, and gathering gold in the blue pastures. He saw them, looking up from the grass where he had thrown himself to gaze more closely at the daisies; and the sleep that pressed down his eyelids seemed to descend from the spaces between the stars. But it was too cold that night to sleep in the fields, when he knew where to find warmth. Like a fox into his hole, the child would creep into the corner where God had stored sleep for him: back he went to the barn, gently trotting, and wormed himself through the cat-hole.

The straw was gone! But he remembered the hay. And happily, for he was tired, there stood the ladder against the loft. Up he went, nor turned aside to the cheese; but sleep was common property still. He groped his way forward through the dark loft until he found the hay, when at once he burrowed into

it like a sand-fish into the wet sand. All night the white horse, a glory vanished in the dark, would be close to him, behind the thin partition of boards. He could hear his very breath as he slept, and to the music of it, audible sign of companionship, he fell fast asleep, and slept until the waking horses woke him.

CHAPTER XVI.
APPRENTICESHIP

He scrambled out on the top of the hay, and looked down on the beautiful creature below him, dawning radiant again with the morning, as it issued undimmed from the black bosom of the night. He was not, perhaps, just so well groomed as white steed might be; it was not a stable where they kept a blue-bag for their grey horses; but to Gibbie's eyes he was so pure, that he began, for the first time in his life, to doubt whether he was himself quite as clean as he ought to be. He did not know, but he would make an experiment for information when he got down to the burn. Meantime was there nothing he could do for the splendid creature? From above, leaning over, he filled his rack with hay; but he had eaten so much grass the night before, that he would not look at it, and Gibbie was disappointed. What should he do next? The thing he would like best would be to look through the ceiling again, and watch the woman at her work. Then, too, he would again smell the boiling porridge, and the burning of the little sprinkles of meal that fell into the fire. He dragged, therefore, the ladder to the opposite end of the barn, and gradually, with no little effort, raised it against the wall. Carefully he crept through the hole, and softly round the shelf, the dangerous part of the pass, and so on to the ceiling, whence he peeped once more down

into the kitchen. His precautions had been so far unnecessary, for as yet it lay unvisited, as witnessed by its disorder. Suddenly came to Gibbie the thought that here was a chance for him—here a path back to the world. Rendered daring by the eagerness of his hope, he got again upon the shelf, and with every precaution lest he should even touch a milkpan, descended by the lower shelves to the floor. There finding the door only latched, he entered the kitchen, and proceeded to do everything he had seen the woman do, as nearly in her style as he could. He swept the floor, and dusted the seats, the window sill, the table, with an apron he found left on a chair, then arranged everything tidily, roused the rested fire, and had just concluded that the only way to get the great pot full of water upon it, would be to hang first the pot on the chain, and then fill it with the water, when his sharp ears caught sounds and then heard approaching feet. He darted into the dairy, and in a few seconds, for he was getting used to the thing now, had clambered upon the ceiling, and was lying flat across the joists, with his eyes to the most commanding crack he had discovered: he was anxious to know how his service would be received. When Jean Mavor—she was the farmer's half-sister—opened the door, she stopped short and stared; the kitchen was not as she had left it the night before! She concluded she must be mistaken, for who could have touched it? and entered. Then it became plain beyond dispute that the floor had been swept, the table wiped, the place redd up, and the fire roused.

"Hoot! I maun hae been walkin' i' my sleep!" said Jean to

herself aloud. "Or maybe that guid laddie Donal Grant's been wullin' to gie me a helpin' han' for's mither's sake, honest wuman! The laddie's guid eneuch for onything!—ay, gien 'twar to mak' a minister o'!"

Eagerly, greedily, Gibbie now watched her every motion, and, bent upon learning, nothing escaped him: he would do much better next morning!—At length the men came in to breakfast, and he thought to enjoy the sight; but, alas! it wrought so with his hunger as to make him feel sick, and he crept away to the barn. He would gladly have lain down in the hay for a while, but that would require the ladder, and he did not now feel able to move it. On the floor of the barn he was not safe, and he got out of it into the cornyard, where he sought the henhouse. But there was no food there yet, and he must not linger near; for, if he were discovered, they would drive him away, and he would lose Donal Grant. He had not seen him at breakfast, for indeed he seldom, during the summer, had a meal except supper in the house. Gibbie, therefore, as he could not eat, ran to the burn and drank—but had no heart that morning for his projected inquiry into the state of his person. He must go to Donal. The sight of him would help him to bear his hunger.

The first indication Donal had of his proximity was the rush of Hornie past him in flight out of the corn. Gibbie was pursuing her with stones for lack of a stick. Thoroughly ashamed of himself, Donal threw his book from him, and ran to meet Gibbie.

"Ye maunna fling stanes, cratur," he said. "Haith! it's no for

me to fin' fau't, though," he added, "sittin' readin' buiks like a gowk 'at I am, an' lattin' the beasts rin wull amo' the corn, 'at's weel peyed to haud them oot o' 't! I'm clean affrontit wi' mysel', cratur."

Gibbie's response was to set off at full speed for the place where Donal had been sitting. He was back in a moment with the book, which he pressed into Donal's hand, while from the other he withdrew his club. This he brandished aloft once or twice, then starting at a steady trot, speedily circled the herd, and returned to his adopted master—only to start again, however, and attack Hornie, whom he drove from the corn-side of the meadow right over to the other: she was already afraid of him. After watching him for a time, Donal came to the conclusion that he could not do more than the cratur if he had as many eyes as Argus, and gave not even one of them to his book. He therefore left all to Gibbie, and did not once look up for a whole hour. Everything went just as it should; and not once, all that day, did Hornie again get a mouthful of the grain. It was rather a heavy morning for Gibbie, though, who had eaten nothing, and every time he came near Donal, saw the handkerchief bulging in the grass, which a little girl had brought and left for him. But he was a rare one both at waiting and at going without.

At last, however, Donal either grew hungry of himself, or was moved by certain understood relations between the sun and the necessities of his mortal frame; for he laid down his book, called out to Gibbie, "Cratur, it's denner-time," and took his

bundle. Gibbie drew near with sparkling eyes. There was no selfishness in his hunger, for, at the worst pass he had ever reached, he would have shared what he had with another, but he looked so eager, that Donal, who himself knew nothing of want, perceived that he was ravenous, and made haste to undo the knots of the handkerchief, which Mistress Jean appeared that day to have tied with more than ordinary vigour, ere she intrusted the bundle to the foreman's daughter. When the last knot yielded, he gazed with astonishment at the amount and variety of provision disclosed.

"Losh!" he exclaimed, "the mistress maun hae kenned there was two o' 's."

He little thought that what she had given him beyond the usual supply was an acknowledgment of services rendered by those same hands into which he now delivered a share, on the ground of other service altogether. It is not always, even where there is no mistake as to the person who has deserved it, that the reward reaches the doer so directly.

Before the day was over, Donal gave his helper more and other pay for his service. Choosing a fit time, when the cattle were well together and in good position, Hornie away at the stone dyke, he took from his pocket a somewhat wasted volume of ballads—ballants, he called them—and said, "Sit ye doon, cratur. Never min' the nowt. I'm gaein' to read till ye."

Gibbie dropped on his crossed legs like a lark to the ground, and sat motionless. Donal, after deliberate search, began to read,

and Gibbie to listen; and it would be hard to determine which found the more pleasure in his part. For Donal had seldom had a listener—and never one so utterly absorbed.

When the hour came for the cattle to go home, Gibbie again remained behind, waiting until all should be still at the farm. He lay on the dyke, brooding over what he had heard, and wondering how it was that Donal got all those strange beautiful words and sounds and stories out of the book.

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