GEORGE MACDONALD

DAVID ELGINBROD

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MacDonald G.

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Содержание

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BOOK I. TURRIEPUFFIT

With him there was a Ploughman, was his brother.

A trewé swinker, and a good was he,
Living in peace and perfect charity.
God loved he best with all his trewé heart,
At allé timés, were it gain or smart,
And then his neighébour right as himselve.

CHAUCER.—Prologue to the Canterbury Tales.

CHAPTER I. THE FIR-WOOD

Of all the flowers in the mead,
Then love I roost these flowers white and rede,
Such that men callen daisies in our town.

I renne blithe
As soon as ever the sun ginneth west,
To see this flower, how it will go to rest,
For fear of night, so hateth she darkness;
Her cheer is plainly spread in the brightness
Of the sunne, for there it will unclose.

CHAUCER—Prologue to the Legend of Good Women.

"Meg! whaur are ye gaein' that get, like a wull shuttle? Come in to the beuk."

Meg's mother stood at the cottage door, with arms akimbo and clouded brow, calling through the boles of a little forest of fir-trees after her daughter. One would naturally presume that the phrase she employed, comparing her daughter's motions to those of a shuttle that had "gane wull," or lost its way, implied that she was watching her as she threaded her way through the trees. But although she could not see her, the fir-wood was certainly the likeliest place for her daughter to be in; and the figure she employed was not in the least inapplicable to Meg's usual mode of wandering through the trees, that operation being commonly performed in the most erratic manner possible. It was the ordinary occupation of the first hour of almost every day of Margaret's life. As soon as she woke in the morning, the fir-wood drew her towards it, and she rose and went. Through its crowd of slender pillars, she strayed hither and thither, in an aimless manner, as if resignedly haunting the neighbourhood of something she had lost, or, hopefully, that of a treasure she expected one day to find.

It did not seem that she had heard her mother's call, for no response followed; and Janet Elginbrod returned into the cottage, where David of the same surname, who was already seated at the white deal table with "the beuk," or large family bible before him, straightway commenced reading a chapter in the usual routine from the Old Testament, the New being reserved for the evening devotions. The chapter was the fortieth of the prophet Isaiah; and as the voice of the reader re-uttered the words of old inspiration, one might have thought that it was the voice of the ancient prophet himself, pouring forth the expression of his own faith in his expostulations with the unbelief of his brethren. The chapter finished—it is none of the shortest, and Meg had not yet returned—the two knelt, and David prayed thus:

"O Thou who holdest the waters in the hollow of ae han', and carriest the lambs o' thy own making in thy bosom with the other han', it would be altogether unworthy o' thee, and o' thy Maijesty o' love, to require o' us that which thou knowest we cannot bring unto thee, until thou enrich us with that same. Therefore, like thine own bairns, we boo doon afore thee, an' pray that thou wouldst tak' thy wull o' us, thy holy an' perfect an' blessed wull o' us; for, O God, we are a' thine ain. An' for oor lassie, wha's oot amo' thy trees, an' wha' we dinna think forgets her Maker, though she may whiles forget her prayers, Lord, keep her a bonnie lassie in thy sicht, as white and clean in thy een as she is fair an' halesome in oors; an' oh! we thank thee, Father in heaven, for giein' her to us. An' noo, for a' oor wrang-duins an' ill-min'ins, for a' oor sins and trespasses o' mony sorts, dinna forget them, O God, till thou pits them a' richt, an' syne exerceese thy michty power e'en ower thine ain sel, an'

clean forget them a'thegither; cast them ahint thy back, whaur e'en thine ain een shall ne'er see them again, that we may walk bold an' upricht afore thee for evermore, an' see the face o' Him wha was as muckle God in doin' thy biddin', as gin he had been ordering' a' thing Himsel. For his sake, Ahmen."

I hope my readers will not suppose that I give this as a specimen of Scotch prayers. I know better than that. David was an unusual man, and his prayers were unusual prayers. The present was a little more so in its style, from the fact that one of the subjects of it was absent, a circumstance that rarely happened. But the degree of difference was too small to be detected by any but those who were quite accustomed to his forms of thought and expression. How much of it Janet understood or sympathized with, it is difficult to say; for anything that could be called a thought rarely crossed the threshold of her utterance. On this occasion, the moment the prayer was ended, she rose from her knees, smoothed down her check apron, and went to the door; where, shading her eyes from the sun with her hand, she peered from under its penthouse into the fir-wood, and said in a voice softened apparently by the exercise in which she had taken a silent share.

"Whaur can the lassie be?"

And where was the lassie? In the fir-wood, to be sure, with the thousand shadows, and the sunlight through it all; for at this moment the light fell upon her far in its depths, and revealed her hastening towards the cottage in as straight a line as the trees would permit, now blotted out by a crossing shadow, and anon radiant in the sunlight, appearing and vanishing as she threaded the upright warp of the fir-wood. It was morning all around her; and one might see that it was morning within her too, as, emerging at last in the small open space around the cottage, Margaret—I cannot call her Meg, although her mother does—her father always called her "Maggy, my doo," Anglicé, dove—Margaret approached her mother with a bright healthful face, and the least possible expression of uneasiness on her fair forehead. She carried a book in her hand.

"What gars ye gang stravaguin' that get, Meg, whan ye ken weel eneuch ye sud a' been in to worship lang syne? An sae we maun hae worship our lanes for want o' you, ye hizzy!"

"I didna ken it was sae late, mither," replied Margaret, in a submissive tone, musical in spite of the rugged dialect into which the sounds were fashioned.

"Nae dout! Ye had yer brakfast, an' ye warna that hungry for the word. But here comes yer father, and ye'll no mend for his flytin', I'se promise."

"Hoots! lat the bairn alane, Janet, my woman. The word'll be mair to her afore lang."

"I wat she has a word o' her nain there. What beuk hae ye gotten there, Meg? Whaur got ye't?"

Had it not been for the handsome binding of the book in her daughter's hand, it would neither have caught the eye, nor roused the suspicions of Janet. David glanced at the book in his turn, and a faint expression of surprise, embodied chiefly in the opening of his eyelids a little wider than usual, crossed his face. But he only said with a smile:

"I didna ken that the tree o' knowledge, wi' sic fair fruit, grew in our wud, Maggy, my doo."

"Whaur gat ye the beuk?" reiterated Janet.

Margaret's face was by this time the colour of the crimson boards of the volume in her hand, but she replied at once:

"I got it frae Maister Sutherlan', I reckon."

Janet's first response was an inverted whistle; her next, another question:

"Maister Sutherlan'! wha's that o't?"

"Hoot, lass!" interposed David, "ye ken weel aneuch. It's the new tutor lad, up at the hoose; a fine, douce, honest chield, an' weel-faured, forby. Lat's see the bit beuky, lassie."

Margaret handed it to her father.

"Col-e-ridge's Poems," read David, with some difficulty.

"Tak' it hame direckly," said Janet.

"Na, na," said David; "a' the apples o' the tree o' knowledge are no stappit wi sut an stew; an' gin this ane be, she'll sune ken by the taste o't what's comin'. It's no muckle o' an ill beuk 'at ye'll read, Maggy, my doo."

"Guid preserve's, man! I'm no sayin' it's an ill beuk. But it's no richt to mak appintments wi' stranger lads i' the wud sae ear' i' the mornin'. Is't noo, yersel, Meg?"

"Mither! mither!" said Margaret, and her eyes flashed through the watery veil that tried to hide them, "hoo can ye? Ye ken yersel I had nae appintment wi' him or ony man."

"Weel, weel!" said Janet; and, apparently either satisfied with or overcome by the emotion she had excited, she turned and went in to pursue her usual house-avocations; while David, handing the book to his daughter, went away down the path that led from the cottage door, in the direction of a road to be seen at a little distance through the trees, which surrounded the cottage on all sides. Margaret followed her mother into the cottage, and was soon as busy as she with her share of the duties of the household; but it was a good many minutes before the cloud caused by her mother's hasty words entirely disappeared from a forehead which might with especial justice be called the sky of her face.

Meantime David emerged upon the more open road, and bent his course, still through fir-trees, towards a house for whose sake alone the road seemed to have been constructed.

CHAPTER II. DAVID ELGINBROD AND THE NEW TUTOR

Concord between our wit and will
Where highest notes to godliness are raised,
And lowest sink not down to jot of ill.

What Languetus taught Sir Philip Sidney.
THE ARCADIA—Third Eclogue.

The House of Turriepuffit stood about a furlong from David's cottage. It was the abode of the Laird, or landed proprietor, in whose employment David filled several offices ordinarily distinct. The estate was a small one, and almost entirely farmed by the owner himself; who, with David's help, managed to turn it to good account. Upon week-days, he appeared on horseback in a costume more fitted for following the plough; but he did not work with his own hands; and on Sundays was at once recognizable as a country gentleman.

David was his bailiff or grieve, to overlook the labourers on the estate; his steward to pay them, and keep the farm accounts; his head gardener—for little labour was expended in that direction, there being only one lady, the mistress of the house, and she no patroness of useless flowers: David was in fact the laird's general adviser and executor.

The laird's family, besides the lady already mentioned, consisted only of two boys, of the ages of eleven and fourteen, whom he wished to enjoy the same privileges he had himself possessed, and to whom, therefore, he was giving a classical and mathematical education, in view of the University, by means of private tutors; the last of whom—for the changes were not few, seeing the salary was of the smallest—was Hugh Sutherland, the young man concerning whom David Elginbrod has already given his opinion. But notwithstanding the freedom he always granted his daughter, and his good opinion of Hugh as well, David could not help feeling a little anxious, in his walk along the road towards the house, as to what the apparent acquaintance between her and the new tutor might evolve; but he got rid of all the difficulty, as far as he was concerned, by saying at last:

"What richt hae I to interfere? even supposin' I wanted to interfere. But I can lippen weel to my bonny doo; an' for the rest, she maun tak' her chance like the lave o's. An' wha' kens but it micht jist be stan'in' afore Him, i' the very get that He meant to gang. The Lord forgie me for speakin' o' chance, as gin I believed in ony sic havers. There's no fear o' the lassie. Gude mornin' t'ye, Maister Sutherlan'. That's a braw beuk o' ballants ye gae the len' o' to my Maggy, this mornin', sir."

Sutherland was just entering a side-door of the house when David accosted him. He was not old enough to keep from blushing at David's words; but, having a good conscience, he was ready with a good answer.

"It's a good book, Mr. Elginbrod. It will do her no harm, though it be ballads."

"I'm in no dreed o' that, sir. Bairns maun hae ballants. An', to tell the truth, sir, I'm no muckle mair nor a bairn in that respeck mysel'. In fac, this verra mornin', at the beuk, I jist thocht I was readin' a gran' godly ballant, an' it soundet nane the waur for the notion o't."

"You should have been a poet yourself, Mr. Elginbrod."

"Na, na; I ken naething aboot yer poetry. I hae read auld John Milton ower an' ower, though I dinna believe the half o't; but, oh! weel I like some o' the bonny bitties at the en' o't."

"Il Penseroso, for instance?"

"Is that hoo ye ca't? I ken't weel by the sicht, but hardly by the soun'. I aye missed the name o't, an' took to the thing itsel'. Eh, man!—I beg yer pardon, sir—but its wonnerfu' bonny!"

"I'll come in some evening, and we'll have a chat about it," replied Sutherland. "I must go to my work now."

"We'll a' be verra happy to see you, sir. Good mornin', sir."

"Good morning."

David went to the garden, where there was not much to be done in the way of education at this season of the year; and Sutherland to the school-room, where he was busy, all the rest of the morning and part of the afternoon, with Caesar and Virgil, Algebra and Euclid; food upon which intellectual babes are reared to the stature of college youths.

Sutherland was himself only a youth; for he had gone early to college, and had not yet quite completed the curriculum. He was now filling up with teaching, the recess between his third and his fourth winter at one of the Aberdeen Universities. He was the son of an officer, belonging to the younger branch of a family of some historic distinction and considerable wealth. This officer, though not far removed from the estate and title as well, had nothing to live upon but his half-pay; for, to the disgust of his family, he had married a Welsh girl of ancient descent, in whose line the poverty must have been at least coeval with the history, to judge from the perfection of its development in the case of her father; and his relations made this the excuse for quarrelling with him; so relieving themselves from any obligations they might have been supposed to lie under, of rendering him assistance of some sort or other. This, however, rather suited the temperament of Major Robert Sutherland, who was prouder in his poverty than they in their riches. So he disowned them for ever, and accommodated himself, with the best grace in the world, to his yet more straitened circumstances. He resolved, however, cost what it might in pinching and squeezing, to send his son to college before turning him out to shift for himself. In this Mrs. Sutherland was ready to support him to the utmost; and so they had managed to keep their boy at college for three sessions; after the last of which, instead of returning home, as he had done on previous occasions, he had looked about him for a temporary engagement as tutor, and soon found the situation he now occupied in the family of William Glasford, Esq., of Turriepuffit, where he intended to remain no longer than the commencement of the session, which would be his fourth and last. To what he should afterwards devote himself he had by no means made up his mind, except that it must of necessity be hard work of some kind or other. So he had at least the virtue of desiring to be independent. His other goods and bads must come out in the course of the story. His pupils were rather stupid and rather good-natured; so that their temperament operated to confirm their intellectual condition, and to render the labour of teaching them considerably irksome. But he did his work tolerably well, and was not so much interested in the result as to be pained at the moderate degree of his success. At the time of which I write, however, the probability as to his success was scarcely ascertained, for he had been only a fortnight at the task.

It was the middle of the month of April, in a rather backward season. The weather had been stormy, with frequent showers of sleet and snow. Old winter was doing his best to hold young Spring back by the skirts of her garment, and very few of the wild flowers had yet ventured to look out of their warm beds in the mould. Sutherland, therefore, had made but few discoveries in the neighbourhood. Not that the weather would have kept him to the house, had he had any particular desire to go out; but, like many other students, he had no predilection for objectless exertion, and preferred the choice of his own weather indoors, namely, from books and his own imaginings, to an encounter with the keen blasts of the North, charged as they often were with sharp bullets of hail. When the sun did shine out between the showers, his cold glitter upon the pools of rain or melted snow, and on the wet evergreens and gravel walks, always drove him back from the window with a shiver. The house, which was of very moderate size and comfort, stood in the midst of plantations, principally of Scotch firs and larches, some of the former old and of great growth, so that they had arrived at the true condition of the tree, which seems to require old age for the perfection of its idea. There was very little to be seen from the windows except this wood, which, somewhat gloomy at almost any season, was at the present cheerless enough; and Sutherland found it very dreary indeed, as exchanged for the wide view from his own home on the side of an open hill in the Highlands.

In the midst of circumstances so uninteresting, it is not to be wondered at, that the glimpse of a pretty maiden should, one morning, occasion him some welcome excitement. Passing downstairs to breakfast, he observed the drawing-room door ajar, and looked in to see what sort of a room it was; for so seldom was it used that he had never yet entered it. There stood a young girl, peeping, with mingled curiosity and reverence, into a small gilt-leaved volume, which she had lifted from the table by which she stood. He watched her for a moment with some interest; when she, seeming to become mesmerically aware that she was not alone, looked up, blushed deeply, put down the book in confusion, and proceeded to dust some of the furniture. It was his first sight of Margaret. Some of the neighbours were expected to dinner, and her aid was in requisition to get the grand room of the house prepared for the occasion. He supposed her to belong to the household, till, one day, feeling compelled to go out for a stroll, he caught sight of her so occupied at the door of her father's cottage, that he perceived at once that must be her home: she was, in fact, seated upon a stool, paring potatoes. She saw him as well, and, apparently ashamed at the recollection of having been discovered idling in the drawing-room, rose and went in. He had met David once or twice about the house, and, attracted by his appearance, had had some conversation with him; but he did not know where he lived, nor that he was the father of the girl whom he had seen.

CHAPTER III. THE DAISY AND THE PRIMROSE

Dear secret Greenness, nursed below
Tempests and winds and winter nights!
Vex not that but one sees thee grow;
That One made all these lesser lights.

HENRY VAUGHAN

It was, of course, quite by accident that Sutherland had met Margaret in the fir-wood. The wind had changed during the night, and swept all the clouds from the face of the sky; and when he looked out in the morning, he saw the fir-tops waving in the sunlight, and heard the sound of a south-west wind sweeping through them with the tune of running waters in its course. It is a well-practised ear that can tell whether the sound it hears be that of gently falling waters, or of wind flowing through the branches of firs. Sutherland's heart, reviving like a dormouse in its hole, began to be joyful at the sight of the genial motions of Nature, telling of warmth and blessedness at hand. Some goal of life, vague but sure, seemed to glimmer through the appearances around him, and to stimulate him to action. Be dressed in haste, and went out to meet the Spring. He wandered into the heart of the wood. The sunlight shone like a sunset upon the red trunks and boughs of the old fir-trees, but like the first sunrise of the world upon the new green fringes that edged the young shoots of the larches. High up, hung the memorials of past summers in the rich brown tassels of the clustering cones; while the ground under foot was dappled with sunshine on the fallen fir-needles, and the great fallen cones which had opened to scatter their autumnal seed, and now lay waiting for decay. Overhead, the tops whence they had fallen, waved in the wind, as in welcome of the Spring, with that peculiar swinging motion which made the poets of the sixteenth century call them "sailing pines." The wind blew cool, but not cold; and was filled with a delicious odour from the earth, which Sutherland took as a sign that she was coming alive at last. And the Spring he went out to meet, met him. For, first, at the foot of a tree, he spied a tiny primrose, peeping out of its rough, careful leaves; and he wondered how, by any metamorphosis, such leaves could pass into such a flower. Had he seen the mother of the next spring-messenger he was about to meet, the same thought would have returned in another form. For, next, as he passed on with the primrose in his hand, thinking it was almost cruel to pluck it, the Spring met him, as if in her own shape, in the person of Margaret, whom he spied a little way off, leaning against the stem of a Scotch fir, and looking up to its top swaying overhead in the first billows of the outburst ocean of life. He went up to her with some shyness; for the presence of even a child-maiden was enough to make Sutherland shy—partly from the fear of startling her shyness, as one feels when drawing near a couching fawn. But she, when she heard his footsteps, dropped her eyes slowly from the tree-top, and, as if she were in her own sanctuary, waited his approach. He said nothing at first, but offered her, instead of speech, the primrose he had just plucked, which she received with a smile of the eyes only, and the sweetest "thank you, sir," he had ever heard. But while she held the primrose in her hand, her eyes wandered to the book which, according to his custom, Sutherland had caught up as he left the house. It was the only well-bound book in his possession; and the eyes of Margaret, not yet tutored by experience, naturally expected an entrancing page within such beautiful boards; for the gayest bindings she had seen, were those of a few old annuals up at the house—and were they not full of the most lovely tales and pictures? In this case, however, her expectation was not vain; for the volume was, as I have already disclosed, Coleridge's Poems.

Seeing her eyes fixed upon the book—"Would you like to read it?" said he.

"If you please, sir," answered Margaret, her eyes brightening with the expectation of deliglit.

"Are you fond of poetry?"

Her face fell. The only poetry she knew was the Scotch Psalms and Paraphrases, and such last-century verses as formed the chief part of the selections in her school-books; for this was a very retired parish, and the newer books had not yet reached its school. She had hoped chiefly for tales.

"I dinna ken much about poetry," she answered, trying to speak English. "There's an old book o't on my father's shelf; but the letters o't are auld-fashioned, an' I dinna care aboot it."

"But this is quite easy to read, and very beautiful," said Hugh.

The girl's eyes glistened for a moment, and this was all her reply.

"Would you like to read it?" resumed Hugh, seeing no further answer was on the road.

She held out her hand towards the volume. When he, in his turn, held the volume towards her hand, she almost snatched it from him, and ran towards the house, without a word of thanks or leave-taking—whether from eagerness, or doubt of the propriety of accepting the offer, Hugh could not conjecture. He stood for some moments looking after her, and then retraced his steps towards the house.

It would have been something, in the monotony of one of the most trying of positions, to meet one who snatched at the offered means of spiritual growth, even if that disciple had not been a lovely girl, with the woman waking in her eyes. He commenced the duties of the day with considerably more of energy than he had yet brought to bear on his uninteresting pupils; and this energy did not flag before its effects upon the boys began to react in fresh impulse upon itself.

CHAPTER IV. THE COTTAGE

O little Bethlem! poor in walls,
But rich in furniture.

JOHN MASON'S Spiritual Songs.

There was one great alleviation to the various discomforts of Sutherland's tutor-life. It was, that, except during school-hours, he was expected to take no charge whatever of his pupils. They ran wild all other times; which was far better, in every way, both for them and for him. Consequently, he was entirely his own master beyond the fixed margin of scholastic duties; and he soon found that his absence, even from the table, was a matter of no interest to the family. To be sure, it involved his own fasting till the next meal-time came round—for the lady was quite a household martinet; but that was his own concern.

That very evening, he made his way to David's cottage, about the country supper-time, when he thought he should most likely find him at home. It was a clear, still, moonlit night, with just an air of frost. There was light enough for him to see that the cottage was very neat and tidy, looking, in the midst of its little forest, more like an English than a Scotch habitation. He had had the advantage of a few months' residence in a leafy region on the other side of the Tweed, and so was able to make the comparison. But what a different leafage that was from this! That was soft, floating, billowy; this hard, stiff, and straight-lined, interfering so little with the skeleton form, that it needed not to be put off in the wintry season of death, to make the trees in harmony with the landscape. A light was burning in the cottage, visible through the inner curtain of muslin, and the outer one of frost. As he approached the door, he heard the sound of a voice; and from the even pitch of the tone, he concluded at once that its owner was reading aloud. The measured cadence soon convinced him that it was verse that was being read; and the voice was evidently that of David, and not of Margaret. He knocked at the door. The voice ceased, chairs were pushed back, and a heavy step approached. David opened the door himself.

"Eh! Maister Sutherlan'," said he, "I thocht it micht aiblins be yersel. Ye're welcome, sir. Come butt the hoose. Our place is but sma', but ye'll no min' sitttin' doon wi' our ain sels. Janet, ooman, this is Maister Sutherlan'. Maggy, my doo, he's a frien' o' yours, o' a day auld, already. Ye're kindly welcome, Maister Sutherlan'. I'm sure it's verra kin' o' you to come an' see the like o' huz."

As Hugh entered, he saw his own bright volume lying on the table, evidently that from which David had just been reading.

Margaret had already placed for him a cushioned arm-chair, the only comfortable one in the house; and presently, the table being drawn back, they were all seated round the peat-fire on the hearth, the best sort for keeping feet warm at least. On the crook, or hooked iron-chain suspended within the chimney, hung a three-footed pot, in which potatoes were boiling away merrily for supper. By the side of the wide chimney, or more properly lum, hung an iron lamp, of an old classical form common to the country, from the beak of which projected, almost horizontally, the lighted wick—the pith of a rush. The light perched upon it was small but clear, and by it David had been reading. Margaret sat right under it, upon a creepie, or small three-legged wooden stool. Sitting thus, with the light falling on her from above, Hugh could not help thinking she looked very pretty. Almost the only object in the distance from which the feeble light was reflected, was the patch-work counterpane of a little bed filling a recess in the wall, fitted with doors which stood open. It was probably Margaret's refuge for the night.

"Well," said the tutor, after they had been seated a few minutes, and had had some talk about the weather—surely no despicable subject after such a morning—the first of Spring—"well, how do you like the English poet, Mr. Elginbrod?"

"Spier that at me this day week, Maister Sutherlan', an' I'll aiblins answer ye; but no the nicht, no the nicht."

"What for no?" said Hugh, taking up the dialect.

"For ae thing, we're nae clean through wi' the auld sailor's story yet; an' gin I hae learnt ae thing aboon anither, its no to pass jeedgment upo' halves. I hae seen ill weather half the simmer, an' a thrang corn-yard after an' a', an' that o' the best. No that I'm ill pleased wi' the bonny ballant aither."

"Weel, will ye jist lat me read the lave o't till ye?"

"Wi' muckle pleesur, sir, an' mony thanks."

He showed Hugh how far they had got in the reading of the "Ancient Mariner"; whereupon he took up the tale, and carried it on to the end. He had some facility in reading with expression, and his few affectations—for it must be confessed he was not free of such faults—were not of a nature to strike uncritical hearers. When he had finished, he looked up, and his eye chancing to light upon Margaret first, he saw that her cheek was quite pale, and her eyes overspread with the film, not of coming tears, but of emotion notwithstanding.

"Well," said Hugh, again, willing to break the silence, and turning towards David, "what do you think of it now you have heard it all?"

Whether Janet interrupted her husband or not, I cannot tell; but she certainly spoke first:

"Tshâvah!"—equivalent to pshaw—"it's a' lees. What for are ye knittin' yer broos ower a leein' ballant—a' havers as weel as lees?"

"I'm no jist prepared to say sae muckle, Janet," replied David; "there's mony a thing 'at's lees, as ye ca't, 'at's no lees a' through. Ye see, Maister Sutherlan', I'm no gleg at the uptak, an' it jist taks me twise as lang as ither fowk to see to the ootside o' a thing. Whiles a sentence 'ill leuk to me clean nonsense a'thegither; an' maybe a haill ook efter, it'll come upo' me a' at ance; an' fegs! it's the best thing in a' the beuk."

Margaret's eyes were fixed on her father with a look which I can only call faithfulness, as if every word he spoke was truth, whether she could understand it or not.

"But perhaps we may look too far for meanings sometimes," suggested Sutherland.

"Maybe, maybe; but when a body has a suspeecion o' a trowth, he sud never lat sit till he's gotten eyther hit, or an assurance that there's nothing there. But there's jist ae thing, in the poem 'at I can pit my finger upo', an' say 'at it's no richt clear to me whether it's a' straucht-foret or no?"

"What's that, Mr. Elginbrod?"

"It's jist this—what for a' thae sailor-men fell doon deid, an' the chield 'at shot the bonnie burdie, an' did a' the mischeef, cam' to little hurt i' the 'en—comparateevely."

"Well," said Hugh, "I confess I'm not prepared to answer the question. If you get any light on the subject"—

"Ow, I daursay I may. A heap o' things comes to me as I'm takin' a daunder by mysel' i' the gloamin'. I'll no say a thing's wrang till I hae tried it ower an' ower; for maybe I haena a richt grip o' the thing ava."

"What can ye expec, Dawvid, o' a leevin' corp, an' a' that?—ay, twa hunner corps—fower times fifty's twa hunner—an' angels turnin' sailors, an' sangs gaein fleein' aboot like laverocks, and tummelin' doon again, tired like?—Gude preserve's a'!"

"Janet, do ye believe 'at ever a serpent spak?"

"Hoot! Dawvid, the deil was in him, ye ken."

"The deil a word o' that's i' the word itsel, though," rejoined David with a smile.

"Dawvid," said Janet, solemnly, and with some consternation, "ye're no gaein' to tell me, sittin' there, at ye dinna believe ilka word 'at's prentit atween the twa brods o' the Bible? What will Maister Sutherlan' think o' ye?"

"Janet, my bonnie lass—" and here David's eyes beamed upon his wife—"I believe as mony o' them as ye do, an' maybe a wheen mair, my dawtie. Keep yer min' easy aboot that. But ye jist see 'at fowk warna a'thegither saitisfeed aboot a sairpent speikin', an' sae they leukit aboot and aboot till at last they fand the deil in him. Gude kens whether he was there or no. Noo, ye see hoo, gin we was to leuk weel aboot thae corps, an' thae angels, an' a' that queer stuff—but oh! it's bonny stuff tee!—we micht fa' in wi' something we didna awthegither expec, though we was leukin' for't a' the time. Sae I maun jist think aboot it, Mr. Sutherlan'; an' I wad fain read it ower again, afore I lippen on giein' my opingan on the maitter. Ye cud lave the bit beukie, sir? We'se tak' guid care o't."

"Ye're verra welcome to that or ony ither beuk I hae," replied Hugh, who began to feel already as if he were in the hands of a superior.

"Mony thanks; but ye see, sir, we hae eneuch to chow upo' for an aucht days or so."

By this time the potatoes wore considered to be cooked, and were accordingly lifted off the fire. The water was then poured away, the lid put aside, and the pot hung once more upon the crook, hooked a few rings further up in the chimney, in order that the potatoes might be thoroughly dry before they were served. Margaret was now very busy spreading the cloth and laying spoon and plates on the table. Hugh rose to go.

"Will ye no bide," said Janet, in a most hospitable tone, "an' tak' a het pitawta wi' us?"

"I'm afraid of being troublesome," answered he.

"Nae fear o' that, gin ye can jist pit up wi' oor hamely meat."

"Mak nae apologies, Janet, my woman," said David. "A het pitawta's aye guid fare, for gentle or semple. Sit ye doun again, Maister Sutherlan'. Maggy, my doo, whaur's the milk?"

"I thocht Hawkie wad hae a drappy o' het milk by this time," said Margaret, "and sae I jist loot it be to the last; but I'll hae't drawn in twa minutes." And away she went with a jug, commonly called a decanter in that part of the north, in her hand.

"That's hardly fair play to Hawkie," said David to Janet with a smile.

"Hoot! Dawvid, ye see we haena a stranger ilka nicht."

"But really," said Hugh, "I hope this is the last time you will consider me a stranger, for I shall be here a great many times—that is, if you don't get tired of me."

"Gie us the chance at least, Maister Sutherlan'. It's no sma' preevilege to fowk like us to hae a frien' wi' sae muckle buik learnin' as ye hae, sir."

"I am afraid it looks more to you than it really is."

"Weel, ye see, we maun a' leuk at the starns frae the hicht o' oor ain een. An' ye seem nigher to them by a lang growth than the lave o's. My man, ye ought to be thankfu'."

With the true humility that comes of worshipping the Truth, David had not the smallest idea that he was immeasurably nearer to the stars than Hugh Sutherland.

Maggie having returned with her jug full of frothy milk, and the potatoes being already heaped up in a wooden bowl or bossie in the middle of the table, sending the smoke of their hospitality to the rafters, Janet placed a smaller wooden bowl, called a caup, filled with deliciously yellow milk of Hawkie's latest gathering, for each individual of the company, with an attendant horn-spoon by its side. They all drew their chairs to the table, and David, asking no blessing, as it was called, but nevertheless giving thanks for the blessing already bestowed, namely, the perfect gift of food, invited Hugh to make a supper. Each, in primitive but not ungraceful fashion, took a potatoe from the dish with the fingers, and ate it, "bite and sup," with the help of the horn-spoon for the milk. Hugh thought he had never supped more pleasantly, and could not help observing how far real good-breeding is independent of the forms and refinements of what has assumed to itself the name of society.

Soon after supper was over, it was time for him to go; so, after kind hand-shakings and good nights, David accompanied him to the road, where he left him to find his way home by the star-light. As he went, he could not help pondering a little over the fact that a labouring man had discovered a difficulty, perhaps a fault, in one of his favourite poems, which had never suggested itself to him. He soon satisfied himself, however, by coming to the conclusion that the poet had not cared about the matter at all, having had no further intention in the poem than Hugh himself had found in it, namely, witchery and loveliness. But it seemed to the young student a wonderful fact, that the intercourse which was denied him in the laird's family, simply from their utter incapacity of yielding it, should be afforded him in the family of a man who had followed the plough himself once, perhaps did so still, having risen only to be the overseer and superior assistant of labourers. He certainly felt, on his way home, much more reconciled to the prospect of his sojourn at Turriepuffit, than he would have thought it possible he ever should.

David lingered a few moments, looking up at the stars, before he re-entered his cottage. When he rejoined his wife and child, he found the Bible already open on the table for their evening devotions. I will close this chapter, as I began the first, with something like his prayer. David's prayers were characteristic of the whole man; but they also partook, in far more than ordinary, of the mood of the moment. His last occupation had been star-gazing:

"O thou, wha keeps the stars alicht, an' our souls burnin' wi' a licht aboon that o' the stars, grant that they may shine afore thee as the stars for ever and ever. An' as thou hauds the stars burnin' a' the nicht, whan there's no man to see, so haud thou the licht burnin' in our souls, whan we see neither thee nor it, but are buried in the grave o' sleep an' forgetfu'ness. Be thou by us, even as a mother sits by the bedside o' her ailin' wean a' the lang nicht; only be thou nearer to us, even in our verra souls, an' watch ower the warl' o' dreams that they mak' for themsels. Grant that more an' more thochts o' thy thinkin' may come into our herts day by day, till there shall be at last an open road atween thee an' us, an' thy angels may ascend and descend upon us, so that we may be in thy heaven, e'en while we are upo' thy earth: Amen."

CHAPTER V. THE STUDENTS

In wood and stone, not the softest, but hardest, be always aptest for portraiture, both fairest for pleasure, and most durable for profit. Hard wits be hard to receive, but sure to keep; painful without weariness, heedful without wavering, constant without new-fangleness; bearing heavy things, though not lightly, yet willingly; entering hard things, though not easily, yet deeply; and so come to that perfectness of learning in the end, that quick wits seem in hope but do not in deed, or else very seldom ever attain unto.—ROGER ASCHAM.—The Schoolmaster.

Two or three very simple causes united to prevent Hugh from repeating his visit to David so soon as he would otherwise have done. One was, that, the fine weather continuing, he was seized with the desire of exploring the neighbourhood. The spring, which sets some wild animals to the construction of new dwellings, incites man to the enlarging of his, making, as it were, by discovery, that which lies around him his own. So he spent the greater parts of several evenings in wandering about the neighbourhood; till at length the moonlight failed him. Another cause was, that, in the act of searching for some books for his boys, in an old garret of the house, which was at once lumber room and library, he came upon some stray volumes of the Waverley novels, with which he was as yet only partially acquainted. These absorbed many of his spare hours. But one evening, while reading the Heart of Midlothian, the thought struck him—what a character David would have been for Sir Walter. Whether he was right or not is a question; but the notion brought David so vividly before him, that it roused the desire to see him. He closed the book at once, and went to the cottage.

"We're no lik'ly to ca' ye onything but a stranger yet, Maister Sutherlan'," said David, as he entered.

"I've been busy since I saw you," was all the excuse Hugh offered.

"Weel, ye'r welcome noo; and ye've jist come in time after a', for it's no that mony hours sin' I fand it oot awthegither to my ain settisfaction."

"Found out what?" said Hugh; for he had forgotten all about the perplexity in which he had left David, and which had been occupying his thoughts ever since their last interview.

"Aboot the cross-bow an' the birdie, ye ken," answered David, in a tone of surprise.

"Yes, to be sure. How stupid of me!" said Hugh.

"Weel, ye see, the meanin' o' the haill ballant is no that ill to win at, seein' the poet himsel' tells us that. It's jist no to be proud or ill-natured to oor neebours, the beasts and birds, for God made ane an' a' o's. But there's harder things in't nor that, and yon's the hardest. But ye see it was jist an unlucky thochtless deed o' the puir auld sailor's, an' I'm thinkin' he was sair reprocht in's hert the minit he did it. His mates was fell angry at him, no for killin' the puir innocent craytur, but for fear o' ill luck in consequence. Syne when nane followed, they turned richt roun', an' took awa' the character o' the puir beastie efter 'twas deid. They appruved o' the verra thing 'at he was nae doot sorry for.—But onything to haud aff o' themsels! Nae suner cam the calm, than roun' they gaed again like the weathercock, an' naething wad content them bit hingin' the deid craytur about the auld man's craig, an' abusin' him forby. Sae ye see hoo they war a wheen selfish crayturs, an' a hantle waur nor the man 'at was led astray into an ill deed. But still he maun rue't. Sae Death got them, an' a kin' o' leevin' Death, a she Death as 'twar, an' in some respecks may be waur than the ither, got grips o' him, puir auld body! It's a' fair and richt to the backbane o' the ballant, Maister Sutherlan', an' that I'se uphaud."

Hugh could not help feeling considerably astonished to hear this criticism from the lips of one whom he considered an uneducated man. For he did not know that there are many other educations besides a college one, some of them tending far more than that to develope the common-sense, or faculty of judging of things by their nature. Life intelligently met and honestly passed, is the best

education of all; except that higher one to which it is intended to lead, and to which it had led David. Both these educations, however, were nearly unknown to the student of books. But he was still more astonished to hear from the lips of Margaret, who was sitting by:

"That's it, father; that's it! I was jist ettlin' efter that same thing mysel, or something like it, but ye put it in the richt words exackly."

The sound of her voice drew Hugh's eyes upon her: he was astonished at the alteration in her countenance. While she spoke it was absolutely beautiful. As soon as she ceased speaking, it settled back into its former shadowless calm. Her father gave her one approving glance and nod, expressive of no surprise at her having approached the same discovery as himself, but testifying pleasure at the coincidence of their opinions. Nothing was left for Hugh but to express his satisfaction with the interpretation of the difficulty, and to add, that the poem would henceforth possess fresh interest for him.

After this, his visits became more frequent; and at length David made a request which led to their greater frequency still. It was to this effect:

"Do ye think, Mr. Sutherlan', I could do onything at my age at the mathematics? I unnerstan' weel eneuch hoo to measur' lan', an' that kin' o' thing. I jist follow the rule. But the rule itsel's a puzzler to me. I dinna understan' it by half. Noo it seems to me that the best o' a rule is, no to mak ye able to do a thing, but to lead ye to what maks the rule richt—to the prenciple o' the thing. It's no 'at I'm misbelievin' the rule, but I want to see the richts o't."

"I've no doubt you could learn fast enough," replied Hugh. "I shall be very happy to help you with it."

"Na, na; I'm no gaein to trouble you. Ye hae eneuch to do in that way. But if ye could jist spare me ane or twa o' yer beuks whiles—ony o' them 'at ye think proper, I sud be muckle obleeged te ye."

Hugh promised and fulfilled; but the result was, that, before long, both the father and the daughter were seated at the kitchen-table, every evening, busy with Euclid and Algebra; and that, on most evenings, Hugh was present as their instructor. It was quite a new pleasure to him. Few delights surpass those of imparting knowledge to the eager recipient. What made Hugh's tutor-life irksome, was partly the excess of his desire to communicate, over the desire of his pupils to partake. But here there was no labour. All the questions were asked by the scholars. A single lesson had not passed, however, before David put questions which Hugh was unable to answer, and concerning which he was obliged to confess his ignorance. Instead of being discouraged, as eager questioners are very ready to be when they receive no answer, David merely said, "Weel, weel, we maun bide a wee," and went on with what he was able to master. Meantime Margaret, though forced to lag a good way behind her father, and to apply much more frequently to their tutor for help, yet secured all she got; and that is great praise for any student. She was not by any means remarkably quick, but she knew when she did not understand; and that is a sure and indispensable step towards understanding. It is indeed a rarer gift than the power of understanding itself.

The gratitude of David was too deep to be expressed in any formal thanks. It broke out at times in two or three simple words when the conversation presented an opportunity, or in the midst of their work, as by its own self-birth, ungenerated by association.

During the lesson, which often lasted more than two hours, Janet would be busy about the room, and in and out of it, with a manifest care to suppress all unnecessary bustle. As soon as Hugh made his appearance, she would put off the stout shoes—man's shoes, as we should consider them—which she always wore at other times, and put on a pair of bauchles; that is, an old pair of her Sunday shoes, put down at heel, and so converted into slippers, with which she could move about less noisily. At times her remarks would seem to imply that she considered it rather absurd in her husband to trouble himself with book-learning; but evidently on the ground that he knew everything already that was worthy of the honour of his acquaintance; whereas, with regard to Margaret, her heart was as evidently full of pride at the idea of the education her daughter was getting from the laird's own tutor.

Now and then she would stand still for a moment, and gaze at them, with her bright black eyes, from under the white frills of her mutch, her bare brown arms akimbo, and a look of pride upon her equally brown honest face.

Her dress consisted of a wrapper, or short loose jacket, of printed calico, and a blue winsey petticoat, which she had a habit of tucking between her knees, to keep it out of harm's way, as often as she stooped to any wet work, or, more especially, when doing anything by the fire. Margaret's dress was, in ordinary, like her mother's, with the exception of the cap; but, every evening, when their master was expected, she put off her wrapper, and substituted a gown of the same material, a cotton print; and so, with her plentiful dark hair gathered neatly under a net of brown silk, the usual head-dress of girls in her position, both in and out of doors, sat down dressed for the sacrament of wisdom. David made no other preparation than the usual evening washing of his large well-wrought hands, and bathing of his head, covered with thick dark hair, plentifully lined with grey, in a tub of cold water; from which his face, which was "cremsin dyed ingrayne" by the weather, emerged glowing. He sat down at the table in his usual rough blue coat and plain brass buttons; with his breeches of broad-striped corduroy, his blue-ribbed stockings, and leather gaiters, or cuiticans, disposed under the table, and his shoes, with five rows of broad-headed nails in the soles, projecting from beneath it on the other side; for he was a tall man—six feet still, although five-and-fifty, and considerably bent in the shoulders with hard work. Sutherland's style was that of a gentleman who must wear out his dress-coat.

Such was the group which, three or four evenings in the week, might be seen in David Elginbrod's cottage, seated around the white deal table, with their books and slates upon it, and searching, by the light of a tallow candle, substituted as more convenient, for the ordinary lamp, after the mysteries of the universe.

The influences of reviving nature and of genial companionship operated very favourably upon Hugh's spirits, and consequently upon his whole powers. For some time he had, as I have already hinted, succeeded in interesting his boy-pupils in their studies; and now the progress they made began to be appreciable to themselves as well as to their tutor. This of course made them more happy and more diligent. There were no attempts now to work upon their parents for a holiday; no real or pretended head or tooth-aches, whose disability was urged against the greater torture of ill-conceded mental labour. They began in fact to understand; and, in proportion to the beauty and value of the thing understood, to understand is to enjoy. Therefore the laird and his lady could not help seeing that the boys were doing well, far better in fact than they had ever done before; and consequently began not only to prize Hugh's services, but to think more highly of his office than had been their wont. The laird would now and then invite him to join him in a tumbler of toddy after dinner, or in a ride round the farm after school hours. But it must be confessed that these approaches to friendliness were rather irksome to Hugh; for whatever the laird might have been as a collegian, he was certainly now nothing more than a farmer. Where David Elginbrod would have described many a "bonny sicht," the laird only saw the probable results of harvest, in the shape of figures in his banking book. On one occasion, Hugh roused his indignation by venturing to express his admiration of the delightful mingling of colours in a field where a good many scarlet poppies grew among the green blades of the corn, indicating, to the agricultural eye, the poverty of the soil where they were found. This fault in the soil, the laird, like a child, resented upon the poppies themselves.

"Nasty, ugly weyds! We'll hae ye admirin' the smut neist," said he, contemptuously; "'cause the bairns can bleck ane anither's faces wi't."

"But surely," said Hugh, "putting other considerations aside, you must allow that the colour, especially when mingled with that of the corn, is beautiful."

"Deil hae't! It's jist there 'at I canna bide the sicht o't. Beauty ye may ca' 't! I see nane o't. I'd as sune hae a reid-heedit bairn, as see thae reid-coatit rascals i' my corn. I houp ye're no gaen to cram stuff like that into the heeds o' the twa laddies. Faith! we'll hae them sawin' thae ill-faured weyds

amang the wheyt neist. Poapies ca' ye them? Weel I wat they're the Popp's ain bairns, an' the scarlet wumman to the mither o' them. Ha! ha! ha!"

Having manifested both wit and Protestantism in the closing sentence of his objurgation, the laird relapsed into good humour and stupidity. Hugh would gladly have spent such hours in David's cottage instead; but he was hardly prepared to refuse his company to Mr. Glasford.

CHAPTER VI. THE LAIRD'S LADY

Ye archewyves, standith at defence, Sin ye been strong, as is a great camayle; Ne suffer not that men you don offence. And slender wives, fell as in battaile, Beth eager, as is a tiger, yond in Inde; Aye clappith as a mill, I you counsaile.
CHAUCER.—The Clerk's Tale.

The length and frequency of Hugh's absences, careless as she was of his presence, had already attracted the attention of Mrs. Glasford; and very little trouble had to be expended on the discovery of his haunt. For the servants knew well enough where he went, and of course had come to their own conclusions as to the object of his visits. So the lady chose to think it her duty to expostulate with Hugh on the subject. Accordingly, one morning after breakfast, the laird having gone to mount his horse, and the boys to have a few minutes' play before lessons, Mrs. Glasford, who had kept her seat at the head of the table, waiting for the opportunity, turned towards Hugh who sat reading the week's news, folded her hands on the tablecloth, drew herself up yet a little more stiffly in her chair, and thus addressed him:

"It's my duty, Mr. Sutherland, seein' ye have no mother to look after ye—"

Hugh expected something matronly about his linen or his socks, and put down his newspaper with a smile; but, to his astonishment, she went on—

–"To remonstrate wi' ye, on the impropriety of going so often to David Elginbrod's. They're not company for a young gentleman like you, Mr. Sutherland."

"They're good enough company for a poor tutor, Mrs. Glasford," replied Hugh, foolishly enough.

"Not at all, not at all," insisted the lady. "With your connexions—"

"Good gracious! who ever said anything about my connexions? I never pretended to have any." Hugh was getting angry already.

Mrs. Glasford nodded her head significantly, as much as to say, "I know more about you than you imagine," and then went on:

"Your mother will never forgive me if you get into a scrape with that smooth-faced hussy; and if her father, honest man hasn't eyes enough in his head, other people have—ay, an' tongues too, Mr. Sutherland."

Hugh was on the point of forgetting his manners, and consigning all the above mentioned organs to perdition; but he managed to restrain his wrath, and merely said that Margaret was one of the best girls he had ever known, and that there was no possible danger of any kind of scrape with her. This mode of argument, however, was not calculated to satisfy Mrs. Glasford. She returned to the charge.

"She's a sly puss, with her shy airs and graces. Her father's jist daft wi' conceit o' her, an' it's no to be surprised if she cast a glamour ower you. Mr. Sutherland, ye're but young yet."

Hugh's pride presented any alliance with a lassie who had herded the laird's cows barefoot, and even now tended their own cow, as an all but inconceivable absurdity; and he resented, more than he could have thought possible, the entertainment of such a degrading idea in the mind of Mrs. Glasford. Indignation prevented him from replying; while she went on, getting more vernacular as she proceeded.

"It's no for lack o' company 'at yer driven to seek theirs, I'm sure. There's twa as fine lads an' gude scholars as ye'll fin' in the haill kintra-side, no to mention the laird and mysel'."

But Hugh could bear it no longer; nor would he condescend to excuse or explain his conduct.

"Madam, I beg you will not mention this subject again."

"But I will mention 't, Mr. Sutherlan'; an' if ye'll no listen to rizzon, I'll go to them 'at maun do't."

"I am accountable to you, madam, for my conduct in your house, and for the way in which I discharge my duty to your children—no further."

"Do ye ca' that dischairgin' yer duty to my bairns, to set them the example o' hingin' at a quean's âpron-strings, and fillin' her lug wi' idle havers? Ca' ye that dischairgin' yer duty? My certie! a bonny dischairgin'!"

"I never see the girl but in her father and mother's presence."

"Weel, weel, Mr. Sutherlan'," said Mrs. Glasford, in a final tone, and trying to smother the anger which she felt she had allowed to carry her further than was decorous, "we'll say nae mair aboot it at present; but I maun jist speak to the laird himsel', an' see what he says till 't."

And, with this threat, she walked out of the room in what she considered a dignified manner.

Hugh was exceedingly annoyed at this treatment, and thought, at first, of throwing up his situation at once; but he got calmer by degrees, and saw that it would be to his own loss, and perhaps to the injury of his friends at the cottage. So he took his revenge by recalling the excited face of Mrs. Glasford, whose nose had got as red with passion as the protuberance of a turkey-cock when gobbling out its unutterable feelings of disdain. He dwelt upon this soothing contemplation till a fit of laughter relieved him, and he was able to go and join his pupils as if nothing had happened.

Meanwhile the lady sent for David, who was at work in the garden, into no less an audience-chamber than the drawing-room, the revered abode of all the tutelar deities of the house; chief amongst which were the portraits of the laird and herself: he, plethoric and wrapped in voluminous folds of neckerchief—she long-necked, and lean, and bare-shouldered. The original of the latter work of art seated herself in the most important chair in the room; and when David, after carefully wiping the shoes he had already wiped three times on his way up, entered with a respectful but no wise obsequious bow, she ordered him, with the air of an empress, to shut the door. When he had obeyed, she ordered him, in a similar tone, to be seated; for she sought to mingle condescension and conciliation with severity.

"David," she then began, "I am informed that ye keep open door to our Mr. Sutherland, and that he spends most forenichts in your company."

"Weel, mem, it's verra true," was all David's answer. He sat in an expectant attitude.

"Dawvid, I wonner at ye!" returned Mrs. Glasford, forgetting her dignity, and becoming confidentially remonstrative. "Here's a young gentleman o' talans, wi' ilka prospeck o' waggin' his heid in a poopit some day; an' ye aid an' abet him in idlin' awa' his time at your chimla-lug, duin' waur nor naething ava! I'm surprised at ye, Dawvid. I thocht ye had mair sense."

David looked out of his clear, blue, untroubled eyes, upon the ruffled countenance of his mistress, with an almost paternal smile.

"Weel, mem, I maun say I dinna jist think the young man's in the warst o' company, when he's at our ingle-neuk. An' for idlin' o' his time awa', it's weel waurd for himsel', forby for us, gin holy words binna lees."

"What do ye mean, Dawvid?" said the lady rather sharply, for she loved no riddles.

"I mean this, mem: that the young man is jist actin' the pairt o' Peter an' John at the bonny gate o' the temple, whan they said: 'Such as I have, gie I thee;' an' gin' it be more blessed to gie than to receive, as Sant Paul says 'at the Maister himsel' said, the young man 'ill no be the waur aff in's ain learnin', that he impairts o't to them that hunger for't."

"Ye mean by this, Dawvid, gin ye could express yersel' to the pint, 'at the young man, wha's ower weel paid to instruck my bairns, neglecks them, an' lays himsel' oot upo' ither fowk's weans, wha hae no richt to ettle aboon the station in which their Maker pat them."

This was uttered with quite a religious fervour of expostulation; for the lady's natural indignation at the thought of Meg Elginbrod having lessons from her boys' tutor, was cowed beneath the quiet steady gaze of the noble-minded peasant father.

"He lays himsel' oot mair upo' the ither fowk themsels' than upo' their weans, mem; though, nae doubt, my Maggy comes in for a gude share. But for negleckin' o' his duty to you, mem, I'm sure I kenna hoo that can be; for it was only yestreen 'at the laird himsel' said to me, 'at hoo the bairns had never gotten on naething like it wi' ony ither body."

"The laird's ower ready wi's clavers," quoth the laird's wife, nettled to find herself in the wrong, and forgetful of her own and her lord's dignity at once. "But," she pursued, "all I can say is, that I consider it verra improper o' you, wi' a young lass-bairn, to encourage the nichtly veesits o' a young gentleman, wha's sae far aboon her in station, an' dootless will some day be farther yet."

"Mem!" said David, with dignity, "I'm willin' no to understan' what ye mean. My Maggy's no ane 'at needs luikin' efter; an' a body had need to be carefu' an' no interfere wi' the Lord's herdin', for he ca's himsel' the Shepherd o' the sheep, an' wee! as I loe her I maun lea' him to lead them wha follow him wherever he goeth. She'll be no ill guidit, and I'm no gaeing to kep her at ilka turn."

"Weel, weel! that's yer ain affair, Dawvid, my man," rejoined Mrs. Glasford, with rising voice and complexion. "A' 'at I hae to add is jist this: 'at as lang as my tutor veesits her"—

"He veesits her no more than me, mem," interposed David; but his mistress went on with dignified disregard of the interruption—

"Veesits her, I canna, for the sake o' my own bairns, an' the morals o' my hoosehold, employ her aboot the hoose, as I was in the way o' doin' afore. Good mornin', Dawvid. I'll speak to the laird himsel', sin' ye'll no heed me."

"It's more to my lassie, mem, excuse me, to learn to unnerstan' the works o' her Maker, than it is to be employed in your household. Mony thanks, mem, for what ye hev' done in that way afore; an' good mornin' to ye, mem. I'm sorry we should hae ony misunderstandin', but I canna help it for my pairt."

With these words David withdrew, rather anxious about the consequences to Hugh of this unpleasant interference on the part of Mrs. Glasford. That lady's wrath kept warm without much nursing, till the laird came home; when she turned the whole of her battery upon him, and kept up a steady fire until he yielded, and promised to turn his upon David. But he had more common-sense than his wife in some things, and saw at once how ridiculous it would be to treat the affair as of importance. So, the next time he saw David, he addressed him half jocularly:

"Weel, Dawvid, you an' the mistress hae been haein' a bit o' a dispute thegither, eh?"

"Weel, sir, we warna a'thegither o' ae min'," said David, with a smile.

"Weel, weel, we maun humour her, ye ken, or it may be the waur for us a', ye ken." And the laird nodded with humorous significance.

"I'm sure I sud be glaid, sir; but this is no sma' maitter to me an' my Maggie, for we're jist gettin' food for the verra sowl, sir, frae him an' his beuks."

"Cudna ye be content wi the beuks wi'out the man, Dawvid?"

"We sud mak' but sma' progress, sir, that get."

The laird began to be a little nettled himself at David's stiffness about such a small matter, and held his peace. David resumed:

"Besides, sir, that's a maitter for the young man to sattle, an' no for me. It wad ill become me, efter a' he's dune for us, to steek the door in's face. Na, na; as lang's I hae a door to haud open, it's no to be steekit to him."

"Efter a', the door's mine, Dawvid," said the laird.

"As lang's I'm in your hoose an' in your service, sir, the door's mine," retorted David, quietly.

The laird turned and rode away without another word. What passed between him and his wife never transpired. Nothing more was said to Hugh as long as he remained at Turriepuffit. But Margaret was never sent for to the House after this, upon any occasion whatever. The laird gave her a nod as often as he saw her; but the lady, if they chanced to meet, took no notice of her. Margaret, on

her part, stood or passed with her eyes on the ground, and no further change of countenance than a slight flush of discomfort.

The lessons went on as usual, and happy hours they were for all those concerned. Often, in after years, and in far different circumstances, the thoughts of Hugh reverted, with a painful yearning, to the dim-lighted cottage, with its clay floor and its deal table; to the earnest pair seated with him at the labours that unfold the motions of the stars; and even to the homely, thickset, but active form of Janet, and that peculiar smile of hers with which, after an apparently snappish speech, spoken with her back to the person addressed, she would turn round her honest face half-apologetically, and shine full upon some one or other of the three, whom she honoured with her whole heart and soul, and who, she feared, might be offended at what she called her “hame-ower fashion of speaking.” Indeed it was wonderful what a share the motherhood of this woman, incapable as she was of entering into the intellectual occupations of the others, had in producing that sense of home-blessedness, which inwrapt Hugh also in the folds of its hospitality, and drew him towards its heart. Certain it is that not one of the three would have worked so well without the sense of the presence of Janet, here and there about the room, or in the immediate neighbourhood of it—love watching over labour. Once a week, always on Saturday nights, Hugh stayed to supper with them: and on these occasions, Janet contrived to have something better than ordinary in honour of their guest. Still it was of the homeliest country fare, such as Hugh could partake of without the least fear that his presence occasioned any inconvenience to his entertainers. Nor was Hugh the only giver of spiritual food. Putting aside the rich gifts of human affection and sympathy, which grew more and more pleasant—I can hardly use a stronger word yet—to Hugh every day, many things were spoken by the simple wisdom of David, which would have enlightened Hugh far more than they did, had he been sufficiently advanced to receive them. But their very simplicity was often far beyond the grasp of his thoughts; for the higher we rise, the simpler we become; and David was one of those of whom is the kingdom of Heaven. There is a childhood into which we have to grow, just as there is a childhood which we must leave behind; a childlikeness which is the highest gain of humanity, and a childishness from which but few of those who are counted the wisest among men, have freed themselves in their imagined progress towards the reality of things.

CHAPTER VII. THE SECRET OF THE WOOD

The unthrift sunne shot vitall gold,
A thousand pieces;
And heaven its azure did unfold,
Chequered with snowy fleeces.
The air was all in spice,
And every bush
A garland wore: Thus fed my Eyes,
But all the Eare lay hush.

HENRY VAUGHAN

It was not in mathematics alone that Hugh Sutherland was serviceable to Margaret Elginbrod. That branch of study had been chosen for her father, not for her; but her desire to learn had led her to lay hold upon any mental provision with which the table happened to be spread; and the more eagerly that her father was a guest at the same feast. Before long, Hugh bethought him that it might possibly be of service to her, in the course of her reading, if he taught her English a little more thoroughly than she had probably picked it up at the parish school, to which she had been in the habit of going till within a very short period of her acquaintance with the tutor.—The English reader must not suppose the term parish school to mean what the same term would mean if used in England. Boys and girls of very different ranks go to the Scotch parish schools, and the fees are so small as to place their education within the reach of almost the humblest means.—To his proposal to this effect Margaret responded thankfully; and it gave Hugh an opportunity of directing her attention to many of the more delicate distinctions in literature, for the appreciation of which she manifested at once a remarkable aptitude.

Coleridge's poems had been read long ago; some of them, indeed, almost committed to memory in the process of repeated perusal. No doubt a good many of them must have been as yet too abstruse for her; not in the least, however, from inaptitude in her for such subjects as they treated of, but simply because neither the terms nor the modes of thought could possibly have been as yet presented to her in so many different positions as to enable her to comprehend their scope. Hugh lent her Sir Walter's poems next, but those she read at an eye-glance. She returned the volume in a week, saying merely, they were "verra bonnie stories." He saw at once that, to have done them justice with the girl, he ought to have lent them first. But that could not be helped now; and what should come next? Upon this he took thought. His library was too small to cause much perplexity of choice, but for a few days he continued undecided.

Meantime the interest he felt in his girl-pupil deepened greatly. She became a kind of study to him. The expression of her countenance was far inferior to her intelligence and power of thought. It was still to excess—almost dull in ordinary; not from any fault in the mould of the features, except, perhaps, in the upper lip, which seemed deficient in drawing, if I may be allowed the expression; but from the absence of that light which indicates the presence of active thought and feeling within. In this respect her face was like the earthen pitcher of Gideon: it concealed the light. She seemed to have, to a peculiar degree, the faculty of retiring inside. But now and then, while he was talking to her, and doubtful, from the lack of expression, whether she was even listening with attention to what he was saying, her face would lighten up with a radiant smile of intelligence; not, however, throwing the light upon him, and in a moment reverting to its former condition of still twilight. Her person seemed not to be as yet thoroughly possessed or informed by her spirit. It sat apart within

her; and there was no ready transit from her heart to her face. This lack of presence in the face is quite common in pretty school-girls and rustic beauties; but it was manifest to an unusual degree in the case of Margaret. Yet most of the forms and lines in her face were lovely; and when the light did shine through them for a passing moment, her countenance seemed absolutely beautiful. Hence it grew into an almost haunting temptation with Hugh, to try to produce this expression, to unveil the coy light of the beautiful soul. Often he tried; often he failed, and sometimes he succeeded. Had they been alone it might have become dangerous—I mean for Hugh; I cannot tell for Margaret.

When they first met, she had just completed her seventeenth year; but, at an age when a town-bred girl is all but a woman, her manners were those of a child. This childishness, however, soon began to disappear, and the peculiar stillness of her face, of which I have already said so much, made her seem older than she was.

It was now early summer, and all the other trees in the wood—of which there were not many besides the firs of various kinds—had put on their fresh leaves, heaped up in green clouds between the wanderer and the heavens. In the morning the sun shone so clear upon these, that, to the eyes of one standing beneath, the light seemed to dissolve them away to the most ethereal forms of glorified foliage. They were to be claimed for earth only by the shadows that the one cast upon the other, visible from below through the transparent leaf. This effect is very lovely in the young season of the year, when the leaves are more delicate and less crowded; and especially in the early morning, when the light is most clear and penetrating. By the way, I do not think any man is compelled to bid good-bye to his childhood: every man may feel young in the morning, middle-aged in the afternoon, and old at night. A day corresponds to a life, and the portions of the one are “pictures in little” of the seasons of the other. Thus far man may rule even time, and gather up, in a perfect being, youth and age at once.

One morning, about six o’clock, Hugh, who had never been so early in the wood since the day he had met Margaret there, was standing under a beech-tree, looking up through its multitudinous leaves, illuminated, as I have attempted to describe, with the sidelong rays of the brilliant sun. He was feeling young, and observing the forms of nature with a keen discriminating gaze: that was all. Fond of writing verses, he was studying nature, not as a true lover, but as one who would hereafter turn his discoveries to use. For it must be confessed that nature affected him chiefly through the medium of poetry; and that he was far more ambitious of writing beautiful things about nature than of discovering and understanding, for their own sakes, any of her hidden yet patent meanings. Changing his attitude after a few moments, he descried, under another beech-tree, not far from him, Margaret, standing and looking up fixedly as he had been doing a moment before. He approached her, and she, hearing his advance, looked, and saw him, but did not move. He thought he saw the glimmer of tears in her eyes. She was the first to speak, however.

“What were you seeing up there, Mr. Sutherland?”

“I was only looking at the bright leaves, and the shadows upon them.”

“Ah! I thocht maybe ye had seen something.”

“What do you mean, Margaret?”

“I dinna richtly ken mysel’. But I aye expeck to see something in this fir-wood. I’m here maist mornin’s as the day dawns, but I’m later the day.”

“We were later than usual at our work last night. But what kind of thing do you expect to see?”

“That’s jist what I dinna ken. An’ I canna min’ whan I began to come here first, luikin’ for something. I’ve tried mony a time, but I canna min’, do what I like.”

Margaret had never said so much about herself before. I can account for it only on the supposition that Hugh had gradually assumed in her mind a kind of pastoral superiority, which, at a favourable moment, inclined her to impart her thoughts to him. But he did not know what to say to this strange fact in her history. She went on, however, as if, having broken the ice, she must sweep it away as well.

"The only thing 'at helps me to account for't, is a picter in our auld Bible, o' an angel sittin' aneth a tree, and haudin' up his han' as gin he were speakin' to a woman 'at's stan'in' afore him. Ilka time 'at I come across that picter, I feel direckly as gin I war my lane in this fir-wood here; sae I suppose that when I was a wee bairn, I maun hae come oot some mornin' my lane, wi' the expectation o' seein' an angel here waitin' for me, to speak to me like the ane i' the Bible. But never an angel hae I seen. Yet I aye hae an expectation like o' seein' something, I kenna what; for the whole place aye seems fu' o' a presence, an' it's a hantle mair to me nor the kirk an' the sermon forby; an' for the singin', the soun' i' the fir-taps is far mair solemn and sweet at the same time, an' muckle mair like praisin' o' God than a' the psalms thegither. But I aye think 'at gin I could hear Milton playin' on's organ, it would be mair like that soun' o' mony waters, than onything else 'at I can think o'."

Hugh stood and gazed at her in astonishment. To his more refined ear, there was a strange incongruity between the somewhat coarse dialect in which she spoke, and the things she uttered in it. Not that he was capable of entering into her feelings, much less of explaining them to her. He felt that there was something remarkable in them, but attributed both the thoughts themselves and their influence on him, to an uncommon and weird imagination. As of such origin, however, he was just the one to value them highly.

"Those are very strange ideas," he said.

"But what can there be about the wood? The very primroses—ye brocht me the first this spring yersel', Mr. Sutherland—come out at the fit o' the trees, and look at me as if they said, 'We ken—we ken a' aboot it;' but never a word mair they say. There's something by ordinar' in't."

"Do you like no other place besides?" said Hugh, for the sake of saying something.

"Ou ay, mony ane; but nane like this."

"What kind of place do you like best?"

"I like places wi' green grass an' flowers amo't."

"You like flowers then?"

"Like them! whiles they gar me greet an' whiles they gar me lauch; but there's mair i' them than that, an' i' the wood too. I canna richtly say my prayers in ony ither place."

The Scotch dialect, especially to one brought up in the Highlands, was a considerable antidote to the effect of the beauty of what Margaret said.

Suddenly it struck Hugh, that if Margaret were such an admirer of nature, possibly she might enjoy Wordsworth. He himself was as yet incapable of doing him anything like justice; and, with the arrogance of youth, did not hesitate to smile at the Excursion, picking out an awkward line here and there as especial food for laughter even. But many of his smaller pieces he enjoyed very heartily, although not thoroughly—the element of Christian Pantheism, which is their soul, being beyond his comprehension, almost perception, as yet. So he made up his mind, after a moment's reflection, that this should be the next author he recommended to his pupil. He hoped likewise so to end an interview, in which he might otherwise be compelled to confess that he could render Margaret no assistance in her search after the something in the wood; and he was unwilling to say he could not understand her; for a power of universal sympathy was one of those mental gifts which Hugh was most anxious to believe he possessed.

"I will bring you another book to-night," said he "which I think you will like, and which may perhaps help you to find out what is in the wood."

He said this smiling, half in playful jest, and without any idea of the degree of likelihood that there was notwithstanding in what he said. For, certainly, Wordsworth, the high-priest of nature, though perhaps hardly the apostle of nature, was more likely than any other writer to contain something of the secret after which Margaret was searching. Whether she can find it there, may seem questionable.

"Thank you, sir," said Margaret, gratefully; but her whole countenance looked troubled, as she turned towards her home. Doubtless, however, the trouble vanished before she reached it, for hers was not a nature to cherish disquietude. Hugh too went home, rather thoughtful.

In the evening, he took a volume of Wordsworth, and repaired, according to his wont, to David's cottage. It was Saturday, and he would stay to supper. After they had given the usual time to their studies, Hugh, setting Margaret some exercises in English to write on her slate, while he helped David with some of the elements of Trigonometry, and again going over those elements with her, while David worked out a calculation—after these were over, and while Janet was putting the supper on the table, Hugh pulled out his volume, and, without any preface, read them the Leech-Gatherer. All listened very intently, Janet included, who delayed several of the operations, that she might lose no word of the verses; David nodding assent every now and then, and ejaculating ay! ay! or eh, man! or producing that strange muffled sound at once common and peculiar to Scotchmen, which cannot be expressed in letters by a nearer approach than hm—hm, uttered, if that can be called uttering, with closed lips and open nasal passage; and Margaret sitting motionless on her creepie, with upturned pale face, and eyes fixed upon the lips of the reader. When he had ceased, all were silent for a moment, when Janet made some little sign of anxiety about her supper, which certainly had suffered by the delay. Then, without a word, David turned towards the table and gave thanks. Turning again to Hugh, who had risen to place his chair, he said,

"That maun be the wark o' a great poet, Mr. Sutherlan'."

"It's Wordsworth's," said Hugh.

"Ay! ay! That's Wordsworth's! Ay! Weel, I hae jist heard him made mention o', but I never read word o' his afore. An' he never repentit o' that same resolution, I'se warrant, 'at he eynds aff wi'. Hoo does it gang, Mr. Sutherlan'?"

Sutherland read:—

> "'God,' said I, 'be my help and stay secure!
> I'll think of the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor;'"

and added, "It is said Wordsworth never knew what it was to be in want of money all his life."

"Nae doubt, nae doubt: he trusted in Him."

It was for the sake of the minute notices of nature, and not for the religious lesson, which he now seemed to see for the first time, that Hugh had read the poem. He could not help being greatly impressed by the confidence with which David received the statement he had just made on the authority of De Quincey in his unpleasant article about Wordsworth. David resumed:

"He maun hae had a gleg 'ee o' his ain, that Maister Wordsworth, to notice a'thing that get. Weel he maun hae likit leevin' things, puir maukin an' a'—jist like our Robbie Burns for that. An' see hoo they a' ken ane anither, thae poets. What says he aboot Burns?—ye needna tell me, Mr. Sutherlan'; I min't weel aneuch. He says:—

> 'Him wha walked in glory an' in joy,
> Followin' his ploo upo' the muntain-side.'

Puir Robbie! puir Robbie! But, man, he was a gran' chield efter a'; an' I trust in God he's won hame by this!"

Both Janet and Hugh, who had had a very orthodox education, started, mentally, at this strange utterance; but they saw the eye of David solemnly fixed, as if in deep contemplation, and lighted in its blue depths with an ethereal brightness; and neither of them ventured to speak. Margaret seemed absorbed for the moment in gazing on her father's face; but not in the least as if it perplexed her like the fir-wood. To the seeing eye, the same kind of expression would have been evident in both

countenances, as if Margaret's reflected the meaning of her father's; whether through the medium of intellectual sympathy, or that of the heart only, it would have been hard to say. Meantime supper had been rather neglected; but its operations were now resumed more earnestly, and the conversation became lighter; till at last it ended in hearty laughter, and Hugh rose and took his leave.

CHAPTER VIII. A SUNDAY MORNING

It is the property of good and sound knowledge, to putrifie and dissolve into a number of subtle, idle, unwholesome, and (as I may tearme them) vermiculate questions; which have indeed a kinde of quicknesse, and life of spirite, but no soundnesse of matter, or goodnesse of quality.—LORD BACON. —Advancement of Learning.

The following morning, the laird's family went to church as usual, and Hugh went with them. Their walk was first across fields, by pleasant footpaths; and then up the valley of a little noisy stream, that obstinately refused to keep Scotch Sabbath, praising the Lord after its own fashion. They emerged into rather a bleak country before reaching the church, which was quite new, and perched on a barren eminence, that it might be as conspicuous by its position, as it was remarkable for its ugliness. One grand aim of the reformers of the Scottish ecclesiastical modes, appears to have been to keep the worship pure and the worshippers sincere, by embodying the whole in the ugliest forms that could be associated with the name of Christianity. It might be wished, however, that some of their followers, and amongst them the clergyman of the church in question, had been content to stop there; and had left the object of worship, as represented by them, in the possession of some lovable attribute; so as not to require a man to love that which is unlovable, or worship that which is not honourable—in a word, to bow down before that which is not divine. The cause of this degeneracy they share in common with the followers of all other great men as well as of Calvin. They take up what their leader, urged by the necessity of the time, spoke loudest, never heeding what he loved most; and then work the former out to a logical perdition of everything belonging to the latter.

Hugh, however, thought it was all right: for he had the same good reasons, and no other, for receiving it all, that a Mohammedan or a Buddhist has for holding his opinions; namely, that he had heard those doctrines, and those alone, from his earliest childhood. He was therefore a good deal startled when, having, on his way home, strayed from the laird's party towards David's, he heard the latter say to Margaret as he came up:

"Dinna ye believe, my bonny doo, 'at there's ony mak' ups or mak' shifts wi' Him. He's aye bringin' things to the licht, no covenin' them up and lattin them rot, an' the moth tak' them. He sees us jist as we are, and ca's us jist what we are. It wad be an ill day for a' o's, Maggy, my doo, gin he war to close his een to oor sins, an' ca' us just in his sicht, whan we cudna possibly be just in oor ain or in ony ither body's, no to say his."

"The Lord preserve's, Dawvid Elginbrod! Dinna ye believe i' the doctrine o' Justification by Faith, an' you a'maist made an elder o'?"

Janet was the respondent, of course, Margaret listening in silence.

"Ou ay, I believe in't, nae doot; but, troth! the minister, honest man, near-han' gart me disbelieve in't a'thegither wi' his gran' sermon this mornin', about imputit richteousness, an' a clean robe hidin' a foul skin or a crookit back. Na, na. May Him 'at woosh the feet o' his friens, wash us a'thegither, and straucht oor crookit banes, till we're clean and weel-faured like his ain bonny sel'."

"Weel, Dawvid—but that's sanctificaition, ye ken."

"Ca't ony name 'at you or the minister likes, Janet, my woman. I daursay there's neither o' ye far wrang after a'; only this is jist my opingan aboot it in sma'—that that man, and that man only, is justifeed, wha pits himsel' into the Lord's han's to sanctifee him. Noo! An' that'll no be dune by pittin' a robe o' richteousness upo' him, afore he's gotten a clean skin aneath't. As gin a father cudna bide to see the puir scabbit skin o' his ain wee bit bairnie, ay, or o' his prodigal son either, but bude to hap it a' up afore he cud lat it come near him! Ahva!"

Here Hugh ventured to interpose a remark.

"But you don't think, Mr. Elginbrod, that the minister intended to say that justification left a man at liberty to sin, or that the robe of Christ's righteousness would hide him from the work of the Spirit?"

"Na; but there is a notion in't o' hidin' frae God himsel'. I'll tell ye what it is Mr. Sutherlan': the minister's a' richt in himsel', an' sae's my Janet here, an' mony mair; an' aiblins there's a kin' o' trowth in a' 'at they say; but this is my quarrel wi' a' thae words an' words an' airguments, an' seemilies as they ca' them, an' doctrines, an' a' that—they jist haud a puir body at airm's lenth oot ower frae God himsel'. An' they raise a mist an' a stour a' aboot him, 'at the puir bairn canna see the Father himsel', stan'in' wi' his airms streekit oot as wide's the heavens, to tak' the worn crater,—and the mair sinner, the mair welcome,—hame to his verra hert. Gin a body wad lea' a' that, and jist get fowk persuâdit to speyk a word or twa to God him lane, the loss, in my opingan, wad be unco sma', and the gain verra great."

Even Janet dared not reply to the solemnity of this speech; for the seer-like look was upon David's face, and the tears had gathered in his eyes and dimmed their blue. A kind of tremulous pathetic smile flickered about his beautifully curved mouth, like the glimmer of water in a valley, betwixt the lofty aquiline nose and the powerful but finely modelled chin. It seemed as if he dared not let the smile break out, lest it should be followed instantly by a burst of tears.

Margaret went close up to her father and took his hand as if she had been still a child, while Janet walked reverentially by him on the other side. It must not be supposed that Janet felt any uneasiness about her husband's opinions, although she never hesitated to utter what she considered her common-sense notions, in attempted modification of some of the more extreme of them. The fact was that, if he was wrong, Janet did not care to be right; and if he was right, Janet was sure to be; "for," said she—and in spirit, if not in the letter, it was quite true—"I never mint at contradickin' him. My man sall hae his ain get, that sall he." But she had one especial grudge at his opinions; which was, that it must have been in consequence of them that he had declined, with a queer smile, the honourable position of Elder of the Kirk; for which Janet considered him, notwithstanding his opinions, immeasurably more fitted than any other man "in the haill country-side—ye may add Scotlan' forby." The fact of his having been requested to fill the vacant place of Elder, is proof enough that David was not in the habit of giving open expression to his opinions. He was looked upon as a douce man, long-headed enough, and somewhat precise in the exaction of the laird's rights, but open-hearted and open-handed with what was his own. Every one respected him, and felt kindly towards him; some were a little afraid of him; but few suspected him of being religious beyond the degree which is commonly supposed to be the general inheritance of Scotchmen, possibly in virtue of their being brought up upon oatmeal porridge and the Shorter Catechism.

Hugh walked behind the party for a short way, contemplating them in their Sunday clothes: David wore a suit of fine black cloth. He then turned to rejoin the laird's company. Mrs. Glasford was questioning her boys, in an intermittent and desultory fashion, about the sermon.

"An' what was the fourth heid, can ye tell me, Willie?"

Willie, the eldest, who had carefully impressed the fourth head upon his memory, and had been anxiously waiting for an opportunity of bringing it out, replied at once:

"Fourthly: The various appellations by which those who have indued the robe of righteousness are designated in Holy Writ."

"Weel done, Willie!" cried the laird.

"That's richt, Willie," said his mother. Then turning to the younger, whose attention was attracted by a strange bird in the hedge in front. "An' what called he them, Johnnie, that put on the robe?" she asked.

"Whited sepulchres," answered Johnnie, indebted for his wit to his wool-gathering.

This put an end to the catechising. Mrs. Glasford glanced round at Hugh, whose defection she had seen with indignation, and who, waiting for them by the roadside, had heard the last question and

reply, with an expression that seemed to attribute any defect in the answer, entirely to the carelessness of the tutor, and the withdrawal of his energies from her boys to that “saucy quean, Meg Elginbrod.”

CHAPTER IX. NATURE

When the Soul is kindled or enlightened by the Holy Ghost, then it beholds what God its Father does, as a Son beholds what his Father does at Home in his own House.—JACOB BEHMEN'S Aurora—Law's Translation.

Margaret began to read Wordsworth, slowly at first, but soon with greater facility. Ere long she perceived that she had found a friend; for not only did he sympathize with her in her love for nature, putting many vague feelings into thoughts, and many thoughts into words for her, but he introduced her to nature in many altogether new aspects, and taught her to regard it in ways which had hitherto been unknown to her. Not only was the pine wood now dearer to her than before, but its mystery seemed more sacred, and, at the same time, more likely to be one day solved. She felt far more assuredly the presence of a spirit in nature,

"Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air;"

for he taught her to take wider views of nature, and to perceive and feel the expressions of more extended aspects of the world around her. The purple hill-side was almost as dear to her as the fir-wood now; and the star that crowned its summit at eve, sparkled an especial message to her, before it went on its way up the blue. She extended her rambles in all directions, and began to get with the neighbours the character of an idle girl. Little they knew how early she rose, and how diligently she did her share of the work, urged by desire to read the word of God in his own handwriting; or rather, to pore upon that expression of the face of God, which, however little a man may think of it, yet sinks so deeply into his nature, and moulds it towards its own likeness.

Nature was doing for Margaret what she had done before for Wordsworth's Lucy: she was making of her "a lady of her own." She grew taller and more graceful. The lasting quiet of her face began to look as if it were ever upon the point of blossoming into an expression of lovely feeling. The principal change was in her mouth, which became delicate and tender in its curves, the lips seeming to kiss each other for very sweetness. But I am anticipating these changes, for it took a far longer time to perfect them than has yet been occupied by my story.

But even her mother was not altogether proof against the appearance of listlessness and idleness which Margaret's behaviour sometimes wore to her eyes; nor could she quite understand or excuse her long lonely walks; so that now and then she could not help addressing her after this fashion:

"Meg! Meg! ye do try my patience, lass, idlin' awa' yer time that get. It's an awfu' wastery o' time, what wi' beuks, an' what wi' stravaguin', an' what wi' naething ava. Jist pit yer han' to this kirn noo, like a gude bairn."

Margaret would obey her mother instantly, but with a look of silent expostulation which her mother could not resist; sometimes, perhaps, if the words were sharper than usual, with symptoms of gathering tears; upon which Janet would say, with her honest smile of sweet relenting,

"Hootoots, bairn! never heed me. My bark's aye waur nor my bite; ye ken that."

Then Margaret's face would brighten at once, and she would work hard at whatever her mother set her to do, till it was finished; upon which her mother would be more glad than she, and in no haste to impose any further labour out of the usual routine.

In the course of reading Wordsworth, Margaret had frequent occasion to apply to Hugh for help. These occasions, however, generally involved no more than small external difficulties, which prevented her from taking in the scope of a passage. Hugh was always able to meet these, and Margaret supposed that the whole of the light which flashed upon her mind when they were removed, was

poured upon the page by the wisdom of her tutor; never dreaming—such was her humility with regard to herself, and her reverence towards him—that it came from the depths of her own lucent nature, ready to perceive what the poet came prepared to show. Now and then, it is true, she applied to him with difficulties in which he was incapable of aiding her; but she put down her failure in discovering the meaning, after all which it must be confessed he sometimes tried to say, to her own stupidity or peculiarity—never to his incapacity. She had been helped to so much by his superior acquirements, and his real gift for communicating what he thoroughly understood; he had been so entirely her guide to knowledge, that she would at once have felt self-condemned of impiety—in the old meaning of the word—if she had doubted for a moment his ability to understand or explain any difficulty which she could place clearly before him.

By-and-by he began to lend her harder, that is, more purely intellectual books. He was himself preparing for the class of Moral Philosophy and Metaphysics; and he chose for her some of the simpler of his books on these subjects—of course all of the Scotch school—beginning with Abercrombie's Intellectual Powers. She took this eagerly, and evidently read it with great attention.

One evening in the end of summer, Hugh climbed a waste heathery hill that lay behind the house of Turriepuffit, and overlooked a great part of the neighbouring country, the peaks of some of the greatest of the Scotch mountains being visible from its top. Here he intended to wait for the sunset. He threw himself on the heather, that most delightful and luxurious of all couches, supporting the body with a kindly upholding of every part; and there he lay in the great slumberous sunlight of the late afternoon, with the blue heavens, into which he was gazing full up, closing down upon him, as the light descended the side of the sky. He fell fast asleep. If ever there be an excuse for falling asleep out of bed, surely it is when stretched at full length upon heather in bloom. When he awoke, the last of the sunset was dying away; and between him and the sunset sat Margaret, book in hand, waiting apparently for his waking. He lay still for a few minutes, to come to himself before she should see he was awake. But she rose at the moment, and drawing near very quietly, looked down upon him with her sweet sunset face, to see whether or not he was beginning to rouse, for she feared to let him lie much longer after sundown. Finding him awake, she drew back again without a word, and sat down as before with her book. At length he rose, and, approaching her, said—

"Well, Margaret, what book are you at now?"

"Dr. Abercrombie, sir," replied Margaret.

"How do you like it?"

"Verra weel for some things. It makes a body think; but not a'thegither as I like to think either."

It will be observed that Margaret's speech had begun to improve, that is, to be more like English.

"What is the matter with it?"

"Weel, ye see, sir, it taks a body a' to bits like, and never pits them together again. An' it seems to me that a body's min' or soul, or whatever it may be called—but it's jist a body's ain sel'—can no more be ta'en to pieces like, than you could tak' that red licht there oot o' the blue, or the haill sunset oot o' the heavens an' earth. It may be a' verra weel, Mr. Sutherland, but oh! it's no like this!"

And Margaret looked around her from the hill-top, and then up into the heavens, where the stars were beginning to crack the blue with their thin, steely sparkle.

"It seems to me to tak' a' the poetry oot o' us, Mr. Sutherland."

"Well, well," said Hugh, with a smile, "you must just go to Wordsworth to put it in again; or to set you again up after Dr. Abercrombie has demolished you."

"Na, na, sir, he sanna demolish me: nor I winna trouble Mr. Wordsworth to put the poetry into me again. A' the power on earth shanna tak' that oot o' me, gin it be God's will; for it's his ain gift, Mr. Sutherland, ye ken."

"Of course, of course," replied Hugh, who very likely thought this too serious a way of speaking of poetry, and therefore, perhaps, rather an irreverent way of speaking of God; for he saw neither the divine in poetry, nor the human in God. Could he be said to believe that God made man, when he did

not believe that God created poetry—and yet loved it as he did? It was to him only a grand invention of humanity in its loftiest development. In this development, then, he must have considered humanity as farthest from its origin; and God as the creator of savages, caring nothing for poets or their work.

They turned, as by common consent, to go down the hill together.

"Shall I take charge of the offending volume? You will not care to finish it, I fear," said Hugh.

"No, sir, if you please. I never like to leave onything unfinished. I'll read ilka word in't. I fancy the thing 'at sets me against it, is mostly this; that, readin' it alang wi' Euclid, I canna help aye thinkin' o' my ain min' as gin it were in some geometrical shape or ither, whiles ane an' whiles anither; and syne I try to draw lines an' separate this power frae that power, the memory frae the jeedgement, an' the imagination frae the rizzon; an' syne I try to pit them a' thegither again in their relations to ane anither. And this aye takes the shape o' some proposition or ither, generally i' the second beuk. It near-han' dazes me whiles. I fancy gin' I understood the pairts o' the sphere, it would be mair to the purpose; but I wat I wish I were clear o't a'thegither."

Hugh had had some experiences of a similar kind himself, though not at all to the same extent. He could therefore understand her.

"You must just try to keep the things altogether apart," said he, "and not think of the two sciences at once."

"But I canna help it," she replied. "I suppose you can, sir, because ye're a man. My father can understan' things ten times better nor me an' my mother. But nae sooner do I begin to read and think about it, than up comes ane o' thae parallelograms, an' nothing will driv't oot o' my head again, but a verse or twa o' Coleridge or Wordsworth."

Hugh immediately began to repeat the first poem of the latter that occurred to him:

"I wandered lonely as a cloud."

She listened, walking along with her eyes fixed on the ground; and when he had finished, gave a sigh of delight and relief—all the comment she uttered. She seemed never to find it necessary to say what she felt; least of all when the feeling was a pleasant one; for then it was enough for itself. This was only the second time since their acquaintance, that she had spoken of her feelings at all; and in this case they were of a purely intellectual origin. It is to be observed, however, that in both cases she had taken pains to explain thoroughly what she meant, as far as she was able.

It was dark before they reached home, at least as dark as it ever is at this season of the year in the north. They found David looking out with some slight anxiety for his daughter's return, for she was seldom out so late as this. In nothing could the true relation between them have been more evident than in the entire absence from her manner of any embarrassment when she met her father. She went up to him and told him all about finding Mr. Sutherland asleep on the hill, and waiting beside him till he woke, that she might walk home with him. Her father seemed perfectly content with an explanation which he had not sought, and, turning to Hugh, said, smiling:

"Weel, no to be troublesome, Mr. Sutherlan', ye maun gie the auld man a turn as weel as the young lass. We didna expec ye the nicht, but I'm sair puzzled wi' a sma' eneuch matter on my sklet in there. Will you no come in and gie me a lift?"

"With all my heart," said Sutherland. So there were five lessons in that week.

When Hugh entered the cottage he had a fine sprig of heather in his hand, which he laid on the table.

He had the weakness of being proud of small discoveries—the tinier the better; and was always sharpening his senses, as well as his intellect, to a fine point, in order to make them. I fear that by these means he shut out some great ones, which could not enter during such a concentration of the faculties. He would stand listening to the sound of goose-feet upon the road, and watch how those webs laid hold of the earth like a hand. He would struggle to enter into their feelings in folding their

wings properly on their backs. He would calculate, on chemical and arithmetical grounds, whether one might not hear the nocturnal growth of plants in the tropics. He was quite elated by the discovery, as he considered it, that Shakspeare named his two officers of the watch, Dogberry and Verjuice; the poisonous Dogberry, and the acid liquor of green fruits, affording suitable names for the stupidly innocuous constables, in a play the very essence of which is Much Ado About Nothing. Another of his discoveries he had, during their last lesson, unfolded to David, who had certainly contemplated it with interest. It was, that the original forms of the Arabic numerals were these:

1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9. {original text has a picture}

the number for which each figure stands being indicated by the number of straight lines employed in forming that numeral. I fear the comparative anatomy of figures gives no countenance to the discovery which Hugh flattered himself he had made.

After he had helped David out of his difficulty, he took up the heather, and stripping off the bells, shook them in his hand at Margaret's ear. A half smile, like the moonlight of laughter, dawned on her face; and she listened with something of the same expression with which a child listens to the message from the sea, inclosed in a twisted shell. He did the same at David's ear next.

"Eh, man! that's a bonny wee soun'! It's jist like sma' sheep-bells—fairy-sheep, I reckon, Maggy, my doo."

"Lat me hearken as weel," said Janet.

Hugh obeyed. She laughed.

"It's naething but a reestlin'. I wad raither hear the sheep baain', or the kye routin'."

"Eh, Mr. Sutherlan'! but, ye hae a gleg ee an' a sharp lug. Weel, the warld's fu' o' bonny sichts and souns, doon to the verra sma'est. The Lord lats naething gang. I wadna wonner noo but there micht be thousands sic like, ower sma' a'thegither for human ears, jist as we ken there are creatures as perfect in beowty as ony we see, but far ower sma' for our een wintin' the glass. But for my pairt, I aye like to see a heap o' things at ance, an' tak' them a' in thegither, an' see them playin' into ane anither's han' like. I was jist thinkin', as I came hame the nicht in the sinset, hoo it wad hae been naewise sae complete, wi' a' its red an' gowd an' green, gin it hadna been for the cauld blue east ahint it, wi' the twa-three shiverin' starnies leukin' through't. An' doubtless the warld to come 'ill be a' the warmer to them 'at hadna ower muckle happin here. But I'm jist haverin', clean haverin', Mr. Sutherlan'," concluded David, with a smile of apologetic humour.

"I suppose you could easily believe with Plato, David, that the planets make a grand choral music as they roll about the heavens, only that as some sounds are too small, so that is too loud for us to hear."

"I cud weel believe that," was David's unhesitating answer. Margaret looked as if she not only could believe it, but would be delighted to know that it was true. Neither Janet nor Hugh gave any indication of feeling on the matter.

CHAPTER X. HARVEST

So a small seed that in the earth lies hid And dies, reviving bursts her cloddy side, Adorned with yellow locks, of new is born, And doth become a mother great with corn, Of grains brings hundreds with it, which when old Enrich the furrows with a sea of gold.
SIR WILLIAM DRUMMOND.—Hymn of the Resurrection.

Hugh had watched the green corn grow, and ear, and turn dim; then brighten to yellow, and ripen at last under the declining autumn sun, and the low skirting moon of the harvest, which seems too full and heavy with mellow and bountiful light to rise high above the fields which it comes to bless with perfection. The long threads, on each of which hung an oat-grain—the harvest here was mostly of oats—had got dry and brittle; and the grains began to spread out their chaff-wings, as if ready to fly, and rustled with sweet sounds against each other, as the wind, which used to billow the fields like the waves of the sea, now swept gently and tenderly over it, helping the sun and moon in the drying and ripening of the joy to be laid up for the dreary winter. Most graceful of all hung those delicate oats; next bowed the bearded barley; and stately and wealthy and strong stood the few fields of wheat, of a rich, ruddy, golden hue. Above the yellow harvest rose the purple hills, and above the hills the pale-blue autumnal sky, full of light and heat, but fading somewhat from the colour with which it deepened above the vanished days of summer. For the harvest here is much later than in England.

At length the day arrived when the sickle must be put into the barley, soon to be followed by the scythe in the oats. And now came the joy of labour. Everything else was abandoned for the harvest field. Books were thrown utterly aside; for, even when there was no fear of a change of weather to urge to labour prolonged beyond the natural hours, there was weariness enough in the work of the day to prevent even David from reading, in the hours of bodily rest, anything that necessitated mental labour.

Janet and Margaret betook themselves to the reaping-hook; and the somewhat pale face of the latter needed but a single day to change it to the real harvest hue—the brown livery of Ceres. But when the oats were attacked, then came the tug of war. The laird was in the fields from morning to night, and the boys would not stay behind; but, with their father's permission, much to the tutor's contentment, devoted what powers they had to the gathering of the fruits of the earth. Hugh himself, whose strength had grown amazingly during his stay at Turriepuffit, and who, though he was quite helpless at the sickle, thought he could wield the scythe, would not be behind. Throwing off coat and waistcoat, and tying his handkerchief tight round his loins, he laid hold on the emblematic weapon of Time and Death, determined likewise to earn the name of Reaper. He took the last scythe. It was desperate work for a while, and he was far behind the first bout; but David, who was the best scyther in the whole country side, and of course had the leading scythe, seeing the tutor dropping behind, put more power to his own arm, finished his own bout, and brought up Hugh's before the others had done sharpening their scythes for the next.

"Tak' care an' nae rax yersel' ower sair, Mr. Sutherlan'. Ye'll be up wi' the best o' them in a day or twa; but gin ye tyauve at it aboon yer strenth, ye'll be clean forfochten. Tak' a guid sweep wi' the scythe, 'at ye may hae the weicht o't to ca' through the strae, an' tak' nae shame at bein' hindmost. Here, Maggy, my doo, come an' gather to Mr. Sutherlan'. Ane o' the young gentlemen can tak' your place at the binin'."

The work of Janet and Margaret had been to form bands for the sheaves, by folding together cunningly the heads of two small handfuls of the corn, so as to make them long enough together to go round the sheaf; then to lay this down for the gatherer to place enough of the mown corn upon it; and last, to bind the band tightly around by another skilful twist and an insertion of the ends, and so form a sheaf. From this work David called his daughter, desirous of giving Hugh a gatherer who

would not be disrespectful to his awkwardness. This arrangement, however, was far from pleasing to some of the young men in the field, and brought down upon Hugh, who was too hard-wrought to hear them at first, many sly hits of country wit and human contempt. There had been for some time great jealousy of his visits at David's cottage; for Margaret, though she had very little acquaintance with the young men of the neighbourhood, was greatly admired amongst them, and not regarded as so far above the station of many of them as to render aspiration useless. Their remarks to each other got louder and louder, till Hugh at last heard some of them, and could not help being annoyed, not by their wit or personality, but by the tone of contempt in which they were uttered.

"Tak' care o' yer legs, sir. It'll be ill cuttin' upo' stumps."

"Fegs! he's taen the wings aff o' a pairtrick."

"Gin he gang on that get, he'll cut twa bouts at ance."

"Ye'll hae the scythe ower the dyke, man. Tak' tent."

"Losh! sir; ye've taen aff my leg at the hip!"

"Ye're shavin' ower close: ye'll draw the bluid, sir."

"Hoot, man! lat alane. The gentleman's only mista'en his trade, an' imaigins he's howkin' a grave."

And so on. Hugh gave no further sign of hearing their remarks than lay in increased exertion. Looking round, however, he saw that Margaret was vexed, evidently not for her own sake. He smiled to her, to console her for his annoyance; and then, ambitious to remove the cause of it, made a fresh exertion, recovered all his distance, and was in his own place with the best of them at the end of the bout. But the smile that had passed between them did not escape unobserved; and he had aroused yet more the wrath of the youths, by threatening soon to rival them in the excellencies to which they had an especial claim. They had regarded him as an interloper, who had no right to captivate one of their rank by arts beyond their reach; but it was still less pardonable to dare them to a trial of skill with their own weapons. To the fire of this jealousy, the admiration of the laird added fuel; for he was delighted with the spirit with which Hugh laid himself to the scythe. But all the time, nothing was further from Hugh's thoughts than the idea of rivalry with them. Whatever he might have thought of Margaret in relation to himself, he never thought of her, though labouring in the same field with them, as in the least degree belonging to their class, or standing in any possible relation to them, except that of a common work.

In ordinary, the labourers would have had sufficient respect for Sutherland's superior position, to prevent them from giving such decided and articulate utterance to their feelings. But they were incited by the presence and example of a man of doubtful character from the neighbouring village, a travelled and clever ne'er-do-weel, whose reputation for wit was equalled by his reputation for courage and skill, as well as profligacy. Roused by the effervescence of his genius, they went on from one thing to another, till Hugh saw it must be put a stop to somehow, else he must abandon the field. They dared not have gone so far if David had been present; but he had been called away to superintend some operations in another part of the estate; and they paid no heed to the expostulations of some of the other older men. At the close of the day's work, therefore, Hugh walked up to this fellow, and said:

"I hope you will be satisfied with insulting me all to-day, and leave it alone to-morrow."

The man replied, with an oath and a gesture of rude contempt,

"I dinna care the black afore my nails for ony skelp-doup o' the lot o' ye."

Hugh's highland blood flew to his brain, and before the rascal finished his speech, he had measured his length on the stubble. He sprang to his feet in a fury, threw off the coat which he had just put on, and darted at Hugh, who had by this time recovered his coolness, and was besides, notwithstanding his unusual exertions, the more agile of the two. The other was heavier and more powerful. Hugh sprang aside, as he would have done from the rush of a bull, and again with a quick blow felled his antagonist. Beginning rather to enjoy punishing him, he now went in for it; and, before the other would yield, he had rendered his next day's labour somewhat doubtful. He withdrew, with

no more injury to himself than a little water would remove. Janet and Margaret had left the field before he addressed the man.

He went borne and to bed—more weary than he had ever been in his life. Before he went to sleep, however, he made up his mind to say nothing of his encounter to David, but to leave him to hear of it from other sources. He could not help feeling a little anxious as to his judgment upon it. That the laird would approve, he hardly doubted; but for his opinion he cared very little.

"Dawvid, I wonner at ye," said Janet to her husband, the moment he came home, "to lat the young lad warstle himsel' deid that get wi' a scythe. His banes is but saft yet, There wasna a dry steek on him or he wan half the lenth o' the first bout. He's sair disjaskit, I'se warran'."

"Nae fear o' him, Janet; it'll do him guid. Mr. Sutherland's no feckless winlestrae o' a creater. Did he haud his ain at a' wi' the lave?"

"Haud his ain! Gin he be fit for onything the day, he maun be pitten neist yersel', or he'll cut the legs aff o' ony ither man i' the corn."

A glow of pleasure mantled in Margaret's face at her mother's praise of Hugh. Janet went on:

"But I was jist clean affronted wi' the way 'at the young chields behaved themselves till him."

"I thocht I heard a toot-moot o' that kin' afore I left, but I thocht it better to tak' nae notice o't. I'll be wi' ye a' day the morn though, an' I'm thinkin' I'll clap a rouch han' on their mou's 'at I hear ony mair o't frae."

But there was no occasion for interference on David's part. Hugh made his appearance—not, it is true, with the earliest in the hairst-rig, but after breakfast with the laird, who was delighted with the way in which he had handled his scythe the day before, and felt twice the respect for him in consequence. It must be confessed he felt very stiff, but the best treatment for stiffness being the homoeopathic one of more work, he had soon restored the elasticity of his muscles, and lubricated his aching joints. His antagonist of the foregoing evening was nowhere to be seen; and the rest of the young men were shame-faced and respectful enough.

David, having learned from some of the spectators the facts of the combat, suddenly, as they were walking home together, held out his hand to Hugh, shook his hard, and said:

"Mr. Sutherlan', I'm sair obleeged to ye for giein' that vratch, Jamie Ogg, a guid doonsettin'. He's a coorse crater; but the warst maun hae meat, an' sae I didna like to refeese him when he cam for wark. But its a greater kin'ness to clout him nor to cleed him. They say ye made an awfu' munsie o' him. But it's to be houpit he'll live to thank ye. There's some fowk 'at can respeck no airgument but frae steekit neives; an' it's fell cruel to haud it frae them, gin ye hae't to gie them. I hae had eneuch ado to haud my ain han's aff o' the ted, but it comes a hantle better frae you, Mr. Sutherlan'."

Hugh wielded the scythe the whole of the harvest, and Margaret gathered to him. By the time it was over, leading-home and all, he measured an inch less about the waist, and two inches more about the shoulders; and was as brown as a berry, and as strong as an ox, or "owse," as David called it, when thus describing Mr. Sutherland's progress in corporal development; for he took a fatherly pride in the youth, to whom, at the same time, he looked up with submission, as his master in learning.

CHAPTER XI. A CHANGE AND NO CHANGE

Affliction, when I know it, is but this— A deep alloy, whereby man tougher is To bear the hammer; and the deeper still, We still arise more image of his will. Sickness—an humorous cloud 'twist us and light; And death, at longest, but another night. Man is his own star; and that soul that can Be honest, is the only perfect Man.
JOHN FLETCHER.—Upon an Honest Man's Fortune.

Had Sutherland been in love with Margaret, those would have been happy days; and that a yet more happy night, when, under the mystery of a low moonlight and a gathering storm, the crop was cast in haste into the carts, and hurried home to be built up in safety; when a strange low wind crept sighing across the stubble, as if it came wandering out of the past and the land of dreams, lying far off and withered in the green west; and when Margaret and he came and went in the moonlight like creatures in a dream—for the vapours of sleep were floating in Hugh's brain, although he was awake and working.

"Margaret," he said, as they stood waiting a moment for the cart that was coming up to be filled with sheaves, "what does that wind put you in mind of?"

"Ossian's Poems," replied Margaret, without a moment's hesitation.

Hugh was struck by her answer. He had meant something quite different. But it harmonized with his feeling about Ossian; for the genuineness of whose poetry, Highlander as he was, he had no better argument to give than the fact, that they produced in himself an altogether peculiar mental condition; that the spiritual sensations he had in reading them were quite different from those produced by anything else, prose or verse; in fact, that they created moods of their own in his mind. He was unwilling to believe, apart from national prejudices (which have not prevented the opinions on this question from being as strong on the one side as on the other), that this individuality of influence could belong to mere affectations of a style which had never sprung from the sources of real feeling. "Could they," he thought, "possess the power to move us like remembered dreams of our childhood, if all that they possessed of reality was a pretended imitation of what never existed, and all that they inherited from the past was the halo of its strangeness?"

But Hugh was not in love with Margaret, though he could not help feeling the pleasure of her presence. Any youth must have been the better for having her near him; but there was nothing about her quiet, self-contained being, free from manifestation of any sort, to rouse the feelings commonly called love, in the mind of an inexperienced youth like Hugh Sutherland.—I say commonly called, because I believe that within the whole sphere of intelligence there are no two loves the same.—Not that he was less easily influenced than other youths. A designing girl might have caught him at once, if she had had no other beauty than sparkling eyes; but the womanhood of the beautiful Margaret kept so still in its pearly cave, that it rarely met the glance of neighbouring eyes. How Margaret regarded him I do not know; but I think it was with a love almost entirely one with reverence and gratitude. Cause for gratitude she certainly had, though less than she supposed; and very little cause indeed for reverence. But how could she fail to revere one to whom even her father looked up? Of course David's feeling of respect for Hugh must have sprung chiefly from intellectual grounds; and he could hardly help seeing, if he thought at all on the subject, which is doubtful, that Hugh was as far behind Margaret in the higher gifts and graces, as he was before her in intellectual acquirement. But whether David perceived this or not, certainly Margaret did not even think in that direction. She was pure of self-judgment—conscious of no comparing of herself with others, least of all with those next her.

At length the harvest was finished; or, as the phrase of the district was, clyack was gotten—a phrase with the derivation, or even the exact meaning of which, I am unacquainted; knowing only that it implies something in close association with the feast of harvest-home, called the kirn in other

parts of Scotland. Thereafter, the fields lay bare to the frosts of morning and evening, and to the wind that grew cooler and cooler with the breath of Winter, who lay behind the northern hills, and waited for his hour. But many lovely days remained, of quiet and slow decay, of yellow and red leaves, of warm noons and lovely sunsets, followed by skies—green from the west horizon to the zenith, and walked by a moon that seemed to draw up to her all the white mists from pond and river and pool, to settle again in hoar-frost, during the colder hours that precede the dawn. At length every leafless tree sparkled in the morning sun, incrusted with fading gems; and the ground was hard under foot; and the hedges were filled with frosted spider-webs; and winter had laid the tips of his fingers on the land, soon to cover it deep with the flickering snow-flakes, shaken from the folds of his outspread mantle. But long ere this, David and Margaret had returned with renewed diligence, and powers strengthened by repose, or at least by intermission, to their mental labours, and Hugh was as constant a visitor at the cottage as before. The time, however, drew nigh when he must return to his studies at Aberdeen; and David and Margaret were looking forward with sorrow to the loss of their friend. Janet, too, "cudna bide to think o't."

"He'll tak' the daylicht wi' him, I doot, my lass," she said, as she made the porridge for breakfast one morning, and looked down anxiously at her daughter, seated on the creepie by the ingle-neuk.

"Na, na, mither," replied Margaret, looking up from her book; "he'll lea' sic gifts ahin' him as'll mak' daylicht i' the dark;" and then she bent her head and went on with her reading, as if she had not spoken.

The mother looked away with a sigh and a slight, sad shake of the head.

But matters were to turn out quite different from all anticipations. Before the day arrived on which Hugh must leave for the university, a letter from home informed him that his father was dangerously ill. He hastened to him, but only to comfort his last hours by all that a son could do, and to support his mother by his presence during the first hours of her loneliness. But anxious thoughts for the future, which so often force themselves on the attention of those who would gladly prolong their brooding over the past, compelled them to adopt an alteration of their plans for the present.

The half-pay of Major Sutherland was gone, of course; and all that remained for Mrs. Sutherland was a small annuity, secured by her husband's payments to a certain fund for the use of officers' widows. From this she could spare but a mere trifle for the completion of Hugh's university-education; while the salary he had received at Turriepuffit, almost the whole of which he had saved, was so small as to be quite inadequate for the very moderate outlay necessary. He therefore came to the resolution to write to the laird, and offer, if they were not yet provided with another tutor, to resume his relation to the young gentlemen for the winter. It was next to impossible to spend money there; and he judged that before the following winter, he should be quite able to meet the expenses of his residence at Aberdeen, during the last session of his course. He would have preferred trying to find another situation, had it not been that David and Janet and Margaret had made there a home for him.

Whether Mrs. Glasford was altogether pleased at the proposal, I cannot tell; but the laird wrote a very gentlemanlike epistle, condoling with him and his mother upon their loss, and urging the usual common-places of consolation. The letter ended with a hearty acceptance of Hugh's offer, and, strange to tell, the unsolicited promise of an increase of salary to the amount of five pounds. This is another to be added to the many proofs that verisimilitude is not in the least an essential element of verity.

He left his mother as soon as circumstances would permit, and returned to Turriepuffit; an abode for the winter very different indeed from that in which he had expected to spend it.

He reached the place early in the afternoon; received from Mrs. Glasford a cold "I hope you're well, Mr. Sutherland;" found his pupils actually reading, and had from them a welcome rather boisterously evidenced; told them to get their books; and sat down with them at once to commence their winter labours. He spent two hours thus; had a hearty shake of the hand from the laird, when he

came home; and, after a substantial tea, walked down to David's cottage, where a welcome awaited him worth returning for.

"Come yer wa's butt," said Janet, who met him as he opened the door without any prefatory knock, and caught him with both hands; "I'm blithe to see yer bonny face ance mair. We're a' jist at ane mair wi' expeckin' o' ye."

David stood in the middle of the floor, waiting for him.

"Come awa', my bonny lad," was all his greeting, as he held out a great fatherly hand to the youth, and, grasping his in the one, clapped him on the shoulder with the other, the water standing in his blue eyes the while. Hugh thought of his own father, and could not restrain his tears. Margaret gave him a still look full in the face, and, seeing his emotion, did not even approach to offer him any welcome. She hastened, instead, to place a chair for him as she had done when first he entered the cottage, and when he had taken it sat down at his feet on her creepie. With true delicacy, no one took any notice of him for some time. David said at last,

"An' hoo's yer puir mother, Mr. Sutherlan'?"

"She's pretty well," was all Hugh could answer.

"It's a sair stroke to bide," said David; "but it's a gran' thing whan a man's won weel throw't. Whan my father deit, I min' weel, I was sae prood to see him lyin' there, in the cauld grandeur o' deith, an' no man 'at daured say he ever did or spak the thing 'at didna become him, 'at I jist gloried i' the mids o' my greetin'. He was but a puir auld shepherd, Mr. Sutherlan', wi' hair as white as the sheep 'at followed him; an' I wat as they followed him, he followed the great Shepherd; an' followed an' followed, till he jist followed Him hame, whaur we're a' boun', an' some o' us far on the road, thanks to Him!"

And with that David rose, and got down the Bible, and, opening it reverently, read with a solemn, slightly tremulous voice, the fourteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. When he had finished, they all rose, as by one accord, and knelt down, and David prayed:

"O Thou in whase sicht oor deeth is precious, an' no licht maitter; wha through darkness leads to licht, an' through deith to the greater life!—we canna believe that thou wouldst gie us ony guid thing, to tak' the same again; for that would be but bairns' play. We believe that thou taks, that thou may gie again the same thing better nor afore—mair o't and better nor we could ha' received it itherwise; jist as the Lord took himsel' frae the sicht o' them 'at lo'ed him weel, that instead o' bein' veesible afore their een, he micht hide himsel' in their verra herts. Come thou, an' abide in us, an' tak' us to bide in thee; an' syne gin we be a' in thee, we canna be that far frae ane anither, though some sud be in haven, an' some upo' earth. Lord help us to do oor wark like thy men an' maidens doon the stair, remin'in' oursel's, 'at them 'at we miss hae only gane up the stair, as gin 'twar to haud things to thy han' i' thy ain presence-chamber, whaur we houp to be called or lang, an' to see thee an' thy Son, wham we lo'e aboon a'; an' in his name we say, Amen!"

Hugh rose from his knees with a sense of solemnity and reality that he had never felt before. Little was said that evening; supper was eaten, if not in silence, yet with nothing that could be called conversation. And, almost in silence, David walked home with Hugh. The spirit of his father seemed to walk beside him. He felt as if he had been buried with him; and had found that the sepulchre was clothed with green things and roofed with stars—was in truth the heavens and the earth in which his soul walked abroad.

If Hugh looked a little more into his Bible, and tried a little more to understand it, after his father's death, it is not to be wondered at. It is but another instance of the fact that, whether from education or from the leading of some higher instinct, we are ready, in every more profound trouble, to feel as if a solution or a refuge lay somewhere—lay in sounds of wisdom, perhaps, to be sought and found in the best of books, the deepest of all the mysterious treasuries of words. But David never sought to influence Hugh to this end. He read the Bible in his family, but he never urged the reading of it on others. Sometimes he seemed rather to avoid the subject of religion altogether; and yet it was

upon those very occasions that, if he once began to speak, he would pour out, before he ceased, some of his most impassioned utterances.

CHAPTER XII. CHARITY

Knowledge bloweth up, but charity buildeth up

LORD BACON'S rendering of 1 Cor. viii. I. Things went on as usual for a few days, when Hugh began to encounter a source of suffering of a very material and unromantic kind, but which, nevertheless, had been able before now, namely, at the commencement of his tutorship, to cause him a very sufficient degree of distress. It was this; that he had no room in which he could pursue his studies in private, without having to endure a most undesirable degree of cold. In summer this was a matter of little moment, for the universe might then be his secret chamber; but in a Scotch spring or autumn, not to say winter, a bedroom without a fire-place, which, strange to say, was the condition of his, was not a study in which thought could operate to much satisfactory result. Indeed, pain is a far less hurtful enemy to thinking than cold. And to have to fight such suffering and its benumbing influences, as well as to follow out a train of reasoning, difficult at any time, and requiring close attention—is too much for any machine whose thinking wheels are driven by nervous gear. Sometimes—for he must make the attempt—he came down to his meals quite blue with cold, as his pupils remarked to their mother; but their observation never seemed to suggest to her mind the necessity of making some better provision for the poor tutor. And Hugh, after the way in which she had behaved to him, was far too proud to ask her a favour, even if he had had hopes of receiving his request. He knew, too, that, in the house, the laird, to interfere in the smallest degree, must imperil far more than he dared. The prospect, therefore, of the coming winter, in a country where there was scarcely any afternoon, and where the snow might lie feet deep for weeks, was not at all agreeable. He had, as I have said, begun to suffer already, for the mornings and evenings were cold enough now, although it was a bright, dry October. One evening Janet remarked that he had caught cold, for he was 'hostin' sair;' and this led Hugh to state the discomfort he was condemned to experience up at the ha' house.

"Weel," said David, after some silent deliberation, "that sattles't; we maun set aboot it immedantly."

Of course Hugh was quite at a loss to understand what he meant, and begged him to explain.

"Ye see," replied David, "we hae verra little hoose-room i' this bit cot; for, excep this kitchen, we hae but the ben whaur Janet and me sleeps; and sae last year I spak' to the laird to lat me hae muckle timmer as I wad need to big a kin' o' a lean-to to the house ahin', so 'at we micht hae a kin' o' a bit parlour like, or rather a roomie 'at ony o' us micht retire till for a bit, gin we wanted to be oor lanes. He had nae objections, honest man. But somehoo or ither I never sat han' till't; but noo the wa's maun be up afore the wat weather sets in. Sae I'se be at it the morn, an' maybe ye'll len' me a han', Mr. Sutherlan', and tak' oot yer wages in house-room an' firin' efter it's dune."

"Thank you heartily!" said Hugh; "that would be delightful. It seems too good to be possible. But will not wooden walls be rather a poor protection against such winters as I suppose you have in these parts?"

"Hootoot, Mr. Sutherlan', ye micht gie me credit for raither mair rumgumption nor that comes till. Timmer was the only thing I not (needed) to spier for; the lave lies to ony body's han'—a few cart-fu's o' sods frae the hill ahint the hoose, an' a han'fu' or twa o' stanes for the chimla oot o' the quarry—there's eneuch there for oor turn ohn blastit mair; an' we'll saw the wood oorsels; an' gin we had ance the wa's up, we can carry on the inside at oor leisur'. That's the way 'at the Maker does wi' oorsels; he gie's us the wa's an' the material, an' a whole lifetime, maybe mair, to furnish the house."

"Capital!" exclaimed Hugh. "I'll work like a horse, and we'll be at it the morn."

"I'se be at it afore daylicht, an' ane or twa o' the lads'll len' me a han' efter wark-hours; and there's yersel', Mr. Sutherlan', worth ane an' a half o' ordinary workers; an' we'll hae truff aneuch

for the wa's in a jiffey. I'll mark a feow saplin's i' the wud here at denner-time, an' we'll hae them for bauks, an' couples, an' things; an' there's plenty dry eneuch for beurds i' the shed, an' bein' but a lean-to, there'll be but half wark, ye ken."

They went out directly, in the moonlight, to choose the spot; and soon came to the resolution to build it so, that a certain back door, which added more to the cold in winter than to the convenience in summer, should be the entrance to the new chamber. The chimney was the chief difficulty; but all the materials being in the immediate neighbourhood, and David capable of turning his hands to anything, no obstruction was feared. Indeed, he set about that part first, as was necessary; and had soon built a small chimney, chiefly of stones and lime; while, under his directions, the walls were making progress at the same time, by the labour of Hugh and two or three of the young men from the farm, who were most ready to oblige David with their help, although they were still rather unfriendly to the colliginer, as they called him. But Hugh's frankness soon won them over, and they all formed within a day or two a very comfortable party of labourers. They worked very hard; for if the rain should set in before the roof was on, their labour would be almost lost from the soaking of the walls. They built them of turf, very thick, with a slight slope on the outside towards the roof; before commencing which, they partially cut the windows out of the walls, putting wood across to support the top. I should have explained that the turf used in building was the upper and coarser part of the peat, which was plentiful in the neighbourhood. The thatch-eaves of the cottage itself projected over the joining of the new roof, so as to protect it from the drip; and David soon put a thick thatch of new straw upon the little building. Second-hand windows were procured at the village, and the holes in the walls cut to their size. They next proceeded to the saw-pit on the estate—for almost everything necessary for keeping up the offices was done on the farm itself—where they sawed thin planks of deal, to floor and line the room, and make it more cosie. These David planed upon one side; and when they were nailed against slight posts all round the walls, and the joints filled in with putty, the room began to look most enticingly habitable. The roof had not been thatched two days before the rain set in; but now they could work quite comfortably inside; and as the space was small, and the forenights were long, they had it quite finished before the end of November. David bought an old table in the village, and one or two chairs; mended them up; made a kind of rustic sofa or settle; put a few bookshelves against the wall; had a peat fire lighted on the hearth every day; and at length, one Saturday evening, they had supper in the room, and the place was consecrated henceforth to friendship and learning. From this time, every evening, as soon as lessons, and the meal which immediately followed them, were over, Hugh betook himself to the cottage, on the shelves of which all his books by degrees collected themselves; and there spent the whole long evening, generally till ten o'clock; the first part alone reading or writing; the last in company with his pupils, who, diligent as ever, now of course made more rapid progress than before, inasmuch as the lessons were both longer and more frequent. The only drawback to their comfort was, that they seemed to have shut Janet out; but she soon remedied this, by contriving to get through with her house work earlier than she had ever done before; and, taking her place on the settle behind them, knitted away diligently at her stocking, which, to inexperienced eyes, seemed always the same, and always in the same state of progress, notwithstanding that she provided the hose of the whole family, blue and grey, ribbed and plain. Her occasional withdrawings, to observe the progress of the supper, were only a cheerful break in the continuity of labour. Little would the passer-by imagine that beneath that roof, which seemed worthy only of the name of a shed, there sat, in a snug little homely room, such a youth as Hugh, such a girl as Margaret, such a grand peasant king as David, and such a true-hearted mother to them all as Janet. There were no pictures and no music; for Margaret kept her songs for solitary places; but the sound of verse was often the living wind which set a-waving the tops of the trees of knowledge, fast growing in the sunlight of Truth. The thatch of that shed-roof was like the grizzled hair of David, beneath which lay the temple not only of holy but of wise and poetic thought. It was like the sylvan abode of the gods, where the architecture and music are all of their own making, in their kind the

more beautiful, the more simple and rude; and if more doubtful in their intent, and less precise in their finish, yet therein the fuller of life and its grace, and the more suggestive of deeper harmonies.

CHAPTER XIII. HERALDRY

And like his father of face and of stature, And false of love—it came him of nature; As doth the fox Renard, the fox's son; Of kinde, he coud his old father's wone, Without lore, as can a drake swim, When it is caught, and carried to the brim.
CHAUCER.—Legend of Phillis.

Of course, the yet more lengthened absences of Hugh from the house were subjects of remark as at the first; but Hugh had made up his mind not to trouble himself the least about that. For some time Mrs. Glasford took no notice of them to himself; but one evening, just as tea was finished, and Hugh was rising to go, her restraint gave way, and she uttered one spiteful speech, thinking it, no doubt, so witty that it ought to see the light.

"Ye're a day-labourer it seems, Mr. Sutherlan', and gang hame at night."

"Exactly so, madam," rejoined Hugh. "There is no other relation between you and me, than that of work and wages. You have done your best to convince me of that, by making it impossible for me to feel that this house is in any sense my home."

With this grand speech he left the room, and from that time till the day of his final departure from Turriepuffit, there was not a single allusion made to the subject.

He soon reached the cottage. When he entered the new room, which was always called Mr. Sutherland's study, the mute welcome afforded him by the signs of expectation, in the glow of the waiting fire, and the outspread arms of the elbow-chair, which was now called his, as well as the room, made ample amends to him for the unfriendliness of Mrs. Glasford. Going to the shelves to find the books he wanted, he saw that they had been carefully arranged on one shelf, and that the others were occupied with books belonging to the house. He looked at a few of them. They were almost all old books, and such as may be found in many Scotch cottages; for instance, Boston's Fourfold State, in which the ways of God and man may be seen through a fourfold fog; Erskine's Divine Sonnets, which will repay the reader in laughter for the pain it costs his reverence, producing much the same effect that a Gothic cathedral might, reproduced by the pencil and from the remembrance of a Chinese artist, who had seen it once; Drelincourt on Death, with the famous ghost-hoax of De Foe, to help the bookseller to the sale of the unsaleable; the Scots Worthies, opening of itself at the memoir of Mr. Alexander Peden; the Pilgrim's Progress, that wonderful inspiration, failing never save when the theologian would sometimes snatch the pen from the hand of the poet; Theron and Aspasio; Village Dialogues; and others of a like class. To these must be added a rare edition of Blind Harry. It was clear to Hugh, unable as he was fully to appreciate the wisdom of David, that it was not from such books as these that he had gathered it; yet such books as these formed all his store. He turned from them, found his own, and sat down to read. By and by David came in.

"I'm ower sune, I doubt, Mr. Sutherlan'. I'm disturbin' ye."

"Not at all," answered Hugh. "Besides, I am not much in a reading mood this evening: Mrs. Glasford has been annoying me again."

"Poor body! What's she been sayin' noo?"

Thinking to amuse David, Hugh recounted the short passage between them recorded above. David, however, listened with a very different expression of countenance from what Hugh had anticipated; and, when he had finished, took up the conversation in a kind of apologetic tone.

"Weel, but ye see," said he, folding his palms together, "she hasna' jist had a'thegither fair play. She does na come o' a guid breed. Man, it's a fine thing to come o' a guid breed. They hae a hantle to answer for 'at come o' decent forbears."

"I thought she brought the laird a good property," said Hugh, not quite understanding David.

"Ow, ay, she brocht him gowpenfu's o' siller; but hoo was't gotten? An' ye ken it's no riches 'at 'ill mak' a guid breed—'cep' it be o' maggots. The richer cheese the mair maggots, ye ken. Ye maunna speyk o' this; but the mistress's father was weel kent to hae made his siller by fardins and bawbees, in creepin', crafty ways. He was a bit merchan' in Aberdeen, an' aye keepit his thoom weel ahint the peint o' the ellwan', sae 'at he made an inch or twa upo' ilka yard he sauld. Sae he took frae his soul, and pat intill his siller-bag, an' had little to gie his dochter but a guid tocher. Mr. Sutherlan', it's a fine thing to come o' dacent fowk. Noo, to luik at yersel': I ken naething aboot yer family; but ye seem at eesicht to come o' a guid breed for the bodily part o' ye. That's a sma' matter; but frae what I ha'e seen—an' I trust in God I'm no' mista'en—ye come o' the richt breed for the min' as weel. I'm no flatterin' ye, Mr. Sutherlan'; but jist layin' it upo' ye, 'at gin ye had an honest father and gran'father, an' especially a guid mither, ye hae a heap to answer for; an' ye ought never to be hard upo' them 'at's sma' creepin' creatures, for they canna help it sae weel as the like o' you and me can."

David was not given to boasting. Hugh had never heard anything suggesting it from his lips before. He turned full round and looked at him. On his face lay a solemn quiet, either from a feeling of his own responsibility, or a sense of the excuse that must be made for others. What he had said about the signs of breed in Hugh's exterior, certainly applied to himself as well. His carriage was full of dignity, and a certain rustic refinement; his voice was wonderfully gentle, but deep; and slowest when most impassioned. He seemed to have come of some gigantic antediluvian breed: there was something of the Titan slumbering about him. He would have been a stern man, but for an unusual amount of reverence that seemed to overflood the sternness, and change it into strong love. No one had ever seen him thoroughly angry; his simple displeasure with any of the labourers, the quality of whose work was deficient, would go further than the laird's oaths.

Hugh sat looking at David, who supported the look with that perfect calmness that comes of unconscious simplicity. At length Hugh's eye sank before David's, as he said:

"I wish I had known your father, then, David."

"My father was sic a ane as I tauld ye the ither day, Mr. Sutherlan'. I'm a' richt there. A puir, semple, God-fearin' shepherd, 'at never gae his dog an ill-deserved word, nor took the skin o' ony puir lammie, wha's woo' he was clippin', atween the shears. He was weel worthy o' the grave 'at he wan till at last. An' my mither was jist sic like, wi' aiblins raither mair heid nor my father. They're her beuks maistly upo' the skelf there abune yer ain, Mr. Sutherlan'. I honour them for her sake, though I seldom trouble them mysel'. She gae me a kin' o' a scunner at them, honest woman, wi' garrin' me read at them o' Sundays, till they near scomfisht a' the guid 'at was in me by nater. There's doctrine for ye, Mr. Sutherlan'!" added David, with a queer laugh.

"I thought they could hardly be your books," said Hugh.

"But I hae ae odd beuk, an' that brings me upo' my pedigree, Mr. Sutherlan'; for the puirest man has as lang a pedigree as the greatest, only he kens less aboot it, that's a'. An' I wat, for yer lords and ladies, it's no a' to their credit 'at's tauld o' their hither-come; an' that's a' against the breed, ye ken. A wilfu' sin in the father may be a sinfu' weakness i' the son; an' that's what I ca' no fair play."

So saying, David went to his bedroom, whence he returned with a very old-looking book, which he laid on the table before Hugh. He opened it, and saw that it was a volume of Jacob Boehmen, in the original language. He found out afterwards, upon further inquiry, that it was in fact a copy of the first edition of his first work, The Aurora, printed in 1612. On the title-page was written a name, either in German or old English character, he was not sure which; but he was able to read it—Martin Elginbrodde. David, having given him time to see all this, went on:

"That buik has been in oor family far langer nor I ken. I needna say I canna read a word o't, nor I never heard o' ane 'at could. But I canna help tellin' ye a curious thing, Mr. Sutherlan', in connexion wi' the name on that buik: there's a gravestane, a verra auld ane—hoo auld I canna weel mak' out, though I gaed ends-errand to Aberdeen to see't—an' the name upo' that gravestane is Martin Elginbrod, but

made mention o' in a strange fashion; an' I'm no sure a'thegither aboot hoo ye'll tak' it, for it soun's rather fearsome at first hearin' o't. But ye'se hae't as I read it:

"'Here lie I, Martin Elginbrodde:
Hae mercy o' my soul, Lord God;
As I wad do, were I Lord God,
And ye were Martin Elginbrodde.'"

Certainly Hugh could not help a slight shudder at what seemed to him the irreverence of the epitaph, if indeed it was not deserving of a worse epithet. But he made no remark; and, after a moment's pause, David resumed:

"I was unco ill-pleased wi't at the first, as ye may suppose, Mr. Sutherlan'; but, after a while, I begude (began) an' gaed through twa or three bits o' reasonin's aboot it, in this way: By the natur' o't, this maun be the man's ain makin', this epitaph; for no ither body cud ha' dune't; and he had left it in's will to be pitten upo' the deid-stane, nae doot: I' the contemplation o' deith, a man wad no be lik'ly to desire the perpetuation o' a blasphemy upo' a table o' stone, to stan' against him for centuries i' the face o' God an' man: therefore it cudna ha' borne the luik to him o' the presumptuous word o' a proud man evenin' himsel' wi' the Almichty. Sae what was't, then, 'at made him mak' it? It seems to me—though I confess, Mr. Sutherlan', I may be led astray by the nateral desire 'at a man has to think weel o' his ain forbears—for 'at he was a forbear o' my ain, I canna weel doot, the name bein' by no means a common ane, in Scotland ony way—I'm sayin', it seems to me, that it's jist a darin' way, maybe a childlike way, o' judgin', as Job micht ha' dune, 'the Lord by himsel';' an' sayin', 'at gin he, Martin Elginbrod, wad hae mercy, surely the Lord was not less mercifu' than he was. The offspring o' the Most High was, as it were, aware o' the same spirit i' the father o' him, as muved in himsel'. He felt 'at the mercy in himsel' was ane o' the best things; an' he cudna think 'at there wad be less o't i' the father o' lichts, frae whom cometh ilka guid an' perfeck gift. An' may be he remembered 'at the Saviour himsel' said: 'Be ye perfect as your father in Heaven is perfect;' and that the perfection o' God, as He had jist pinted oot afore, consisted in causin' his bonny sun to shine on the evil an' the good, an' his caller rain to fa' upo' the just an' the unjust."

It may well be doubted whether David's interpretation of the epitaph was the correct one. It will appear to most of my readers to breathe rather of doubt lighted up by hope, than of that strong faith which David read in it. But whether from family partiality, and consequent unwillingness to believe that his ancestor had been a man who, having led a wild, erring, and evil life, turned at last towards the mercy of God as his only hope, which the words might imply; or simply that he saw this meaning to be the best; this was the interpretation which David had adopted.

"But," interposed Hugh, "supposing he thought all that, why should he therefore have it carved on his tombstone?"

"I hae thocht aboot that too," answered David. "For ae thing, a body has but feow ways o' sayin' his say to his brithermen. Robbie Burns cud do't in sang efter sang; but maybe this epitaph was a' that auld Martin was able to mak'. He michtna hae had the gift o' utterance. But there may be mair in't nor that. Gin the clergy o' thae times warna a gey hantle mair enlichtened nor a fowth o' the clergy hereabouts, he wad hae heard a heap aboot the glory o' God, as the thing 'at God himsel' was maist anxious aboot uphaudin', jist like a prood creater o' a king; an' that he wad mak' men, an' feed them, an' cleed them, an' gie them braw wives an' toddlin' bairnies, an' syne damn them, a' for's ain glory. Maybe ye wadna get mony o' them 'at wad speyk sae fair-oot noo-a-days, for they gang wi' the tide jist like the lave; but i' my auld minny's buiks, I hae read jilt as muckle as that, an' waur too. Mony ane 'at spak like that, had nae doot a guid meanin' in't; but, hech man! it's an awesome deevilich way o' sayin' a holy thing. Noo, what better could puir auld Martin do, seein' he had no ae word to say i' the kirk a' his lifelang, nor jist say his ae word, as pithily as might be, i' the kirkyard, efter he was

deid; an' ower an' ower again, wi' a tongue o' stane, let them tak' it or lat it alane 'at likit? That's a' my defence o' my auld luckie-daddy—Heaven rest his brave auld soul!"

"But are we not in danger," said Hugh, "of thinking too lightly and familiarly of the Maker, when we proceed to judge him so by ourselves?"

"Mr. Sutherlan'," replied David, very solemnly, "I dinna thenk I can be in muckle danger o' lichtlyin' him, whan I ken in my ain sel', as weel as she 'at was healed o' her plague, 'at I wad be a horse i' that pleuch, or a pig in that stye, not merely if it was his will—for wha can stan' against that—but if it was for his glory; ay, an' comfort mysel', a' the time the change was passin' upo' me, wi' the thocht that, efter an' a', his blessed han's made the pigs too."

"But, a moment ago, David, you seemed to me to be making rather little of his glory."

"O' his glory, as they consider glory—ay; efter a warldly fashion that's no better nor pride, an' in him would only be a greater pride. But his glory! consistin' in his trowth an' lovin'kindness—(man! that's a bonny word)—an' grand self-forgettin' devotion to his creaters—lord! man, it's unspeakable. I care little for his glory either, gin by that ye mean the praise o' men. A heap o' the anxiety for the spread o' his glory, seems to me to be but a desire for the sempathy o' ither fowk. There's no fear but men 'll praise him, a' in guid time—that is, whan they can. But, Mr. Sutherlan', for the glory o' God, raither than, if it were possible, one jot or one tittle should fail of his entire perfection of holy beauty, I call God to witness, I would gladly go to hell itsel'; for no evil worth the full name can befall the earth or ony creater in't, as long as God is what he is. For the glory o' God, Mr. Sutherlan', I wad die the deith. For the will o' God, I'm ready for onything he likes. I canna surely be in muckle danger o' lichtlyin' him. I glory in my God."

The almost passionate earnestness with which David spoke, would alone have made it impossible for Hugh to reply at once. After a few moments, however, he ventured to ask the question:

"Would you do nothing that other people should know God, then, David?"

"Onything 'at he likes. But I would tak' tent o' interferin'. He's at it himsel' frae mornin' to nicht, frae year's en' to year's en'."

"But you seem to me to make out that God is nothing but love!"

"Ay, naething but love. What for no?"

"Because we are told he is just."

"Would he be lang just if he didna lo'e us?"

"But does he not punish sin?"

"Would it be ony kin'ness no to punish sin? No to us a' means to pit awa' the ae ill thing frae us? Whatever may be meant by the place o' meesery, depen' upo't, Mr. Sutherlan', it's only anither form o' love, love shinin' through the fogs o' ill, an' sae gart leuk something verra different thereby. Man, raither nor see my Maggy—an' ye'll no doot 'at I lo'e her—raither nor see my Maggy do an ill thing, I'd see her lyin' deid at my feet. But supposin' the ill thing ance dune, it's no at my feet I wad lay her, but upo' my heart, wi' my auld arms aboot her, to hand the further ill aff o' her. An' shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? O my God! my God!"

The entrance of Margaret would have prevented the prosecution of this conversation, even if it had not already drawn to a natural close. Not that David would not have talked thus before his daughter, but simply that minds, like instruments, need to be brought up to the same pitch, before they can "atone together," and that one feels this instinctively on the entrance of another who has not gone through the same immediate process of gradual elevation of tone.

Their books and slates were got out, and they sat down to their work; but Hugh could not help observing that David, in the midst of his lines and angles and algebraic computations, would, every now and then, glance up at Margaret, with a look of tenderness in his face yet deeper and more delicate in its expression than ordinary. Margaret was, however, quite unconscious of it, pursuing her work with her ordinary even diligence. But Janet observed it.

"What ails the bairn, Dawvid, 'at ye leuk at her that get? said she.

"Naething ails her, woman. Do ye never leuk at a body but when something ails them?"

"Ow, ay—but no that get."

"Weel, maybe I was thinkin' hoo I wad leuk at her gin onything did ail her."

"Hoot! hoot! dinna further the ill hither by makin' a bien doonsittin' an' a bed for't."

All David's answer to this was one of his own smiles.

At supper, for it happened to be Saturday, Hugh said:

"I've been busy, between whiles, inventing, or perhaps discovering, an etymological pedigree for you, David!"

"Weel, lat's hear't," said David.

"First—do you know that that volume with your ancestor's name on it, was written by an old German shoemaker, perhaps only a cobbler, for anything I know?"

"I know nothing aboot it, more or less," answered David.

"He was a wonderful man. Some people think he was almost inspired."

"Maybe, maybe," was all David's doubtful response.

"At all events, though I know nothing about it myself, he must have written wonderfully for a cobbler."

"For my pairt," replied David, "if I see no wonder in the man, I can see but little in the cobbler. What for shouldna a cobbler write wonnerfully, as weel as anither? It's a trade 'at furthers meditation. My grandfather was a cobbler, as ye ca't; an' they say he was no fule in his ain way either."

"Then it does go in the family!" cried Hugh, triumphantly. "I was in doubt at first whether your name referred to the breadth of your shoulders, David, as transmitted from some ancient sire, whose back was an Ellwand-broad; for the g might come from a w or v, for anything I know to the contrary. But it would have been braid in that case. And, now, I am quite convinced that that Martin or his father was a German, a friend of old Jacob Boehmen, who gave him the book himself, and was besides of the same craft; and he coming to this country with a name hard to be pronounced, they found a resemblance in the sound of it to his occupation; and so gradually corrupted his name, to them uncouth, into Elsynbrod, Elshinbrod, thence Elginbrod, with a soft g, and lastly Elginbrod, as you pronounce it now, with a hard g. This name, turned from Scotch into English, would then be simply Martin Awlbore. The cobbler is in the family, David, descended from Jacob Boehmen himself, by the mother's side."

This heraldic blazon amused them all very much, and David expressed his entire concurrence with it, declaring it to be incontrovertible. Margaret laughed heartily.

Besides its own beauty, two things made Margaret's laugh of some consequence; one was, that it was very rare; and the other, that it revealed her two regular rows of dainty white teeth, suiting well to the whole build of the maiden. She was graceful and rather tall, with a head which, but for its smallness, might have seemed too heavy for the neck that supported it, so ready it always was to droop like a snowdrop. The only parts about her which Hugh disliked, were her hands and feet. The former certainly had been reddened and roughened by household work: but they were well formed notwithstanding. The latter he had never seen, notwithstanding the bare-foot habits of Scotch maidens; for he saw Margaret rarely except in the evenings, and then she was dressed to receive him. Certainly, however, they were very far from following the shape of the clumsy country shoes, by which he misjudged their proportions. Had he seen them, as he might have seen them some part of any day during the summer, their form at least would have satisfied him.

CHAPTER XIV. WINTER

Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it? The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.

He giveth snow like wool; he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes.

JOB xxxviii. 29, 30; PSALM cxlvii. 16.

Winter was fairly come at last. A black frost had bound the earth for many days; and at length a peculiar sensation, almost a smell of snow in the air, indicated an approaching storm. The snow fell at first in a few large unwilling flakes, that fluttered slowly and heavily to the earth, where they lay like the foundation of the superstructure that was about to follow. Faster and faster they fell—wonderful multitudes of delicate crystals, adhering in shapes of beauty which outvied all that jeweller could invent or execute of ethereal, starry forms, structures of evanescent yet prodigal loveliness—till the whole air was obscured by them, and night came on, hastened by an hour, from the gathering of their white darkness. In the morning, all the landscape was transfigured. The snow had ceased to fall; but the whole earth, houses, fields, and fences, ponds and streams, were changed to whiteness. But most wonderful looked the trees—every bough and every twig thickened, and bent earthward with its own individual load of the fairy ghost-birds. Each retained the semblance of its own form, wonderfully, magically altered by its thick garment of radiant whiteness, shining gloriously in the sunlight. It was the shroud of dead nature; but a shroud that seemed to prefigure a lovely resurrection; for the very death-robe was unspeakably, witchingly beautiful. Again at night the snow fell; and again and again, with intervening days of bright sunshine. Every morning, the first fresh footprints were a new wonder to the living creatures, the young-hearted amongst them at least, who lived and moved in this death-world, this sepulchral planet, buried in the shining air before the eyes of its sister-stars in the blue, deathless heavens. Paths had to be cleared in every direction towards the out-houses, and again cleared every morning; till at last the walls of solid rain stood higher than the head of little Johnnie, as he was still called, though he was twelve years old. It was a great delight to him to wander through the snow-avenues in every direction; and great fun it was, both to him and his brother, when they were tired of snowballing each other and every living thing about the place except their parents and tutor, to hollow out mysterious caves and vaulted passages. Sometimes they would carry these passages on from one path to within an inch or two of another, and there lie in wait till some passer-by, unweeting of harm, was just opposite their lurking cave; when they would dash through the solid wall of snow with a hideous yell, almost endangering the wits of the maids, and causing a recoil and startled ejaculation even of the strong man on whom they chanced to try their powers of alarm. Hugh himself was once glad to cover the confusion of his own fright with the hearty fit of laughter into which the perturbation of the boys, upon discovering whom they had startled, threw him. It was rare fun to them; but not to the women about the house, who moved from place to place in a state of chronic alarm, scared by the fear of being scared; till one of them going into hysterics, real or pretended, it was found necessary to put a stop to the practice; not, however, before Margaret had had her share of the jest. Hugh happened to be looking out of his window at the moment—watching her, indeed, as she passed towards the kitchen with some message from her mother; when an indescribable monster, a chaotic mass of legs and snow, burst, as if out of the earth, upon her. She turned pale as the snow around her (and Hugh had never observed before how dark her eyes were), as she sprang back with the grace of a startled deer. She uttered no cry, however, perceiving in a moment who it was, gave a troubled little smile, and passed on her way as if nothing had happened. Hugh was not sorry when maternal orders were issued against the practical joke. The boys did not respect their mother very much, but they dared not disobey her, when she spoke in a certain tone.

There was no pathway cut to David's cottage; and no track trodden, except what David, coming to the house sometimes, and Hugh going every afternoon to the cottage, made between them. Hugh often went to the knees in snow, but was well dried and warmed by Janet's care when he arrived. She had always a pair of stockings and slippers ready for him at the fire, to be put on the moment of his arrival; and exchanged again for his own, dry and warm, before he footed once more the ghostly waste. When neither moon was up nor stars were out, there was a strange eerie glimmer from the snow that lighted the way home; and he thought there must be more light from it than could be accounted for merely by the reflection of every particle of light that might fall upon it from other sources.

Margaret was not kept to the house by the snow, even when it was falling. She went out as usual —not of course wandering far, for walking was difficult now. But she was in little danger of losing her way, for she knew the country as well as any one; and although its face was greatly altered by the filling up of its features, and the uniformity of the colour, yet those features were discernible to her experienced eye through the sheet that covered them. It was only necessary to walk on the tops of dykes, and other elevated ridges, to keep clear of the deep snow.

There were many paths between the cottages and the farms in the neighbourhood, in which she could walk with comparative ease and comfort. But she preferred wandering away through the fields and toward the hills. Sometimes she would come home like a creature of the snow, born of it, and living in it; so covered was she from head to foot with its flakes. David used to smile at her with peculiar complacency on such occasions. It was evident that it pleased him she should be the playmate of Nature. Janet was not altogether indulgent to these freaks, as she considered them, of Marget—she had quite given up calling her Meg, "sin' she took to the beuk so eident." But whatever her mother might think of it, Margaret was in this way laying up a store not only of bodily and mental health, but of resources for thought and feeling, of secret understandings and communions with Nature, and everything simple, and strong, and pure through Nature, than which she could have accumulated nothing more precious.

This kind of weather continued for some time, till the people declared they had never known a storm last so long "ohn ever devallt," that is, without intermission. But the frost grew harder; and then the snow, instead of falling in large adhesive flakes, fell in small dry flakes, of which the boys could make no snaw-ba's. All the time, however, there was no wind; and this not being a sheep country, there was little uneasiness or suffering occasioned by the severity of the weather, beyond what must befall the poorer classes in every northern country during the winter.

One day, David heard that a poor old man of his acquaintance was dying, and immediately set out to visit him, at a distance of two or three miles. He returned in the evening, only in time for his studies; for there was of course little or nothing to be done at present in the way of labour. As he sat down to the table, he said:

"I hae seen a wonnerfu' sicht sin' I saw you, Mr. Sutherlan'. I gaed to see an auld Christian, whase body an' brain are nigh worn oot. He was never onything remarkable for intellec, and jist took what the minister tellt him for true, an' keepit the guid o't; for his hert was aye richt, an' his faith a hantle stronger than maybe it had ony richt to be, accordin' to his ain opingans; but, hech! there's something far better nor his opingans i' the hert o' ilka God-fearin' body. Whan I gaed butt the hoose, he was sittin' in's auld arm-chair by the side o' the fire, an' his face luikit dazed like. There was no licht in't but what cam' noo an' than frae a low i' the fire. The snaw was driftin' a wee aboot the bit winnock, an' his auld een was fixed upo't; an' a' 'at he said, takin' no notice o' me, was jist, 'The birdies is flutterin'; the birdies is flutterin'.' I spak' till him, an' tried to roose him, wi' ae thing after anither, bit I micht as weel hae spoken to the door-cheek, for a' the notice that he took. Never a word he spak', but aye 'The birdies is flutterin'.' At last, it cam' to my min' 'at the body was aye fu' o' ane o' the psalms in particler; an' sae I jist said till him at last: 'John, hae ye forgotten the twenty-third psalm?' 'Forgotten the twenty-third psalm!' quo' he; an' his face lighted up in a moment frae the inside: 'The Lord's my shepherd,—an' I hae followed Him through a' the smorin' drift o' the warl',

an' he'll bring me to the green pastures an' the still waters o' His summer-kingdom at the lang last. I shall not want. An' I hae wanted for naething, naething.' He had been a shepherd himsel' in's young days. And so on he gaed, wi' a kin' o' a personal commentary on the haill psalm frae beginnin' to en', and syne he jist fell back into the auld croonin' sang, 'The birdies is flutterin'; the birdies is flutterin'.' The licht deed oot o' his face, an' a' that I could say could na' bring back the licht to his face, nor the sense to his tongue. He'll sune be in a better warl'. Sae I was jist forced to leave him. But I promised his dochter, puir body, that I would ca' again an' see him the morn's afternoon. It's unco dowie wark for her; for they hae scarce a neebor within reach o' them, in case o' a change; an' there had hardly been a creatur' inside o' their door for a week."

The following afternoon, David set out according to his promise. Before his return, the wind, which had been threatening to wake all day, had risen rapidly, and now blew a snowstorm of its own. When Hugh opened the door to take his usual walk to the cottage, just as darkness was beginning to fall, the sight he saw made his young strong heart dance with delight. The snow that fell made but a small part of the wild, confused turmoil and uproar of the ten-fold storm. For the wind, raving over the surface of the snow, which, as I have already explained, lay nearly as loose as dry sand, swept it in thick fierce clouds along with it, tearing it up and casting it down again no one could tell where —for the whole air was filled with drift, as they call the snow when thus driven. A few hours of this would alter the face of the whole country, leaving some parts bare, and others buried beneath heaps on heaps of snow, called here snaw-wreaths. For the word snow-wreaths does not mean the lovely garlands hung upon every tree and bush in its feathery fall; but awful mounds of drifted snow, that may be the smooth, soft, white sepulchres of dead men, smothered in the lapping folds of the almost solid wind. Path or way was none before him. He could see nothing but the surface of a sea of froth and foam, as it appeared to him, with the spray torn from it, whirled in all shapes and contortions, and driven in every direction; but chiefly, in the main direction of the wind, in long sloping spires of misty whiteness, swift as arrows, and as keen upon the face of him who dared to oppose them.

Hugh plunged into it with a wild sense of life and joy. In the course of his short walk, however, if walk it could be called, which was one chain of plungings and emergings, struggles with the snow, and wrestles with the wind, he felt that it needed not a stout heart only, but sound lungs and strong limbs as well, to battle with the storm, even for such a distance. When he reached the cottage, he found Janet in considerable anxiety, not only about David, who had not yet returned, but about Margaret as well, whom she had not seen for some time, and who must be out somewhere in the storm—"the wull hizzie." Hugh suggested that she might have gone to meet her father.

"The Lord forbid!" ejaculated Janet. "The road lies ower the tap o' the Halshach, as eerie and bare a place as ever was hill-moss, wi' never a scoug or bield in't, frae the tae side to the tither. The win' there jist gangs clean wud a'thegither. An' there's mony a well-ee forbye, that gin ye fell intill't, ye wud never come at the boddom o't. The Lord preserve's! I wis' Dawvid was hame."

"How could you let him go, Janet?"

"Lat him gang, laddie! It's a strang tow 'at wad haud or bin' Dawvid, whan he considers he bud to gang, an' 'twere intill a deil's byke. But I'm no that feared aboot him. I maist believe he's under special protection, if ever man was or oucht to be; an' he's no more feared at the storm, nor gin the snaw was angels' feathers flauchterin' oot o' their wings a' aboot him. But I'm no easy i' my min' aboot Maggy—the wull hizzie! Gin she be meetin' her father, an' chance to miss him, the Lord kens what may come o' her."

Hugh tried to comfort her, but all that could be done was to wait David's return. The storm seemed to increase rather than abate its force. The footprints Hugh had made, had all but vanished already at the very door of the house, which stood quite in the shelter of the fir-wood. As they looked out, a dark figure appeared within a yard or two of the house.

"The Lord grant it be my bairn!" prayed poor Janet. But it was David, and alone. Janet gave a shriek.

"Dawvid, whaur's Maggie?"

"I haena seen the bairn," replied David, in repressed perturbation. "She's no theroot, is she, the nicht?"

"She's no at hame, Dawvid, that's a' 'at I ken."

"Whaur gaed she?"

"The Lord kens. She's smoored i' the snaw by this time."

"She's i' the Lord's han's, Janet, be she aneath a snaw-vraith. Dinna forget that, wuman. Hoo lang is't sin' ye missed her?"

"An hour an' mair—I dinna ken hoo lang. I'm clean doitit wi' dreid."

"I'll awa' an' leuk for her. Just haud the hert in her till I come back, Mr. Sutherlan'."

"I won't be left behind, David. I'm going with you."

"Ye dinna ken what ye're sayin', Mr. Sutherlan'. I wad sune hae twa o' ye to seek in place o' ane."

"Never heed me; I'm going on my own account, come what may."

"Weel, weel; I downa bide to differ. I'm gaein up the burn-side; baud ye ower to the farm, and spier gin onybody's seen her; an' the lads 'll be out to leuk for her in a jiffey. My puir lassie!"

The sigh that must have accompanied the last words, was lost in the wind, as they vanished in the darkness. Janet fell on her knees in the kitchen, with the door wide open, and the wind drifting in the powdery snow, and scattering it with the ashes from the hearth over the floor. A picture of more thorough desolation can hardly be imagined. She soon came to herself, however; and reflecting that, if the lost child was found, there must be a warm bed to receive her, else she might be a second time lost, she rose and shut the door, and mended the fire. It was as if the dumb attitude of her prayer was answered; for though she had never spoken or even thought a word, strength was restored to her distracted brain. When she had made every preparation she could think of, she went to the door again, opened it, and looked out. It was a region of howling darkness, tossed about by pale snow-drifts; out of which it seemed scarce more hopeful that welcome faces would emerge, than that they should return to our eyes from the vast unknown in which they vanish at last. She closed the door once more, and knowing nothing else to be done, sat down on a chair, with her hands on her knees, and her eyes fixed on the door. The clock went on with its slow swing, tic—tac, tic—tac, an utterly inhuman time-measurer; but she heard the sound of every second, through the midst of the uproar in the fir-trees, which bent their tall heads hissing to the blast, and swinging about in the agony of their strife. The minutes went by, till an hour was gone, and there was neither sound nor hearing, but of the storm and the clock. Still she sat and stared, her eyes fixed on the door-latch. Suddenly, without warning it was lifted, and the door opened. Her heart bounded and fluttered like a startled bird; but alas! the first words she heard were: "Is she no come yet?" It was her husband, followed by several of the farm servants. He had made a circuit to the farm, and finding that Hugh had never been there, hoped, though with trembling, that Margaret had already returned home. The question fell upon Janet's heart like the sound of the earth on the coffin-lid, and her silent stare was the only answer David received.

But at that very moment, like a dead man burst from the tomb, entered from behind the party at the open door, silent and white, with rigid features and fixed eyes, Hugh. He stumbled in, leaning forward with long strides, and dragging something behind him. He pushed and staggered through them as if he saw nothing before him; and as they parted horror-stricken, they saw that it was Margaret, or her dead body, that he dragged after him. He dropped her at her mother's feet, and fell himself on the floor, before they were able to give him any support. David, who was quite calm, got the whisky bottle out, and tried to administer some to Margaret first; but her teeth were firmly set, and to all appearance she was dead. One of the young men succeeded better with Hugh, whom at David's direction they took into the study; while he and Janet got Margaret undressed and put to bed, with hot bottles all about her; for in warmth lay the only hope of restoring her. After she had lain thus for a while, she gave a sigh; and when they had succeeded in getting her to swallow some warm milk, she began to breathe, and soon seemed to be only fast asleep. After half an hour's rest and warming,

Hugh was able to move and speak. David would not allow him to say much, however, but got him to bed, sending word to the house that he could not go home that night. He and Janet sat by the fireside all night, listening to the storm that still raved without, and thanking God for both of the lives. Every few minutes a tip-toe excursion was made to the bedside, and now and then to the other room. Both the patients slept quietly. Towards morning Margaret opened her eyes, and faintly called her mother; but soon fell asleep once more, and did not awake again till nearly noon. When sufficiently restored to be able to speak, the account she gave was, that she had set out to meet her father; but the storm increasing, she had thought it more prudent to turn. It grew in violence, however, so rapidly, and beat so directly in her face, that she was soon exhausted with struggling, and benumbed with the cold. The last thing she remembered was, dropping, as she thought, into a hole, and feeling as if she were going to sleep in bed, yet knowing it was death; and thinking how much sweeter it was than sleep. Hugh's account was very strange and defective, but he was never able to add anything to it. He said that, when he rushed out into the dark, the storm seized him like a fury, beating him about the head and face with icy wings, till he was almost stunned. He took the road to the farm, which lay through the fir-wood; but he soon became aware that he had lost his way and might tramp about in the fir-wood till daylight, if he lived as long. Then, thinking of Margaret, he lost his presence of mind, and rushed wildly along. He thought he must have knocked his head against the trunk of a tree, but he could not tell; for he remembered nothing more but that he found himself dragging Margaret, with his arms round her, through the snow, and nearing the light in the cottage-window. Where or how he had found her, or what the light was that he was approaching, he had not the least idea. He had only a vague notion that he was rescuing Margaret from something dreadful. Margaret, for her part, had no recollection of reaching the fir-wood, and as, long before morning, all traces were obliterated, the facts remained a mystery. Janet thought that David had some wonderful persuasion about it; but he was never heard even to speculate on the subject. Certain it was, that Hugh had saved Margaret's life. He seemed quite well next day, for he was of a very powerful and enduring frame for his years. She recovered more slowly, and perhaps never altogether overcame the effects of Death's embrace that night. From the moment when Margaret was brought home, the storm gradually died away, and by the morning all was still; but many starry and moonlit nights glimmered and passed, before that snow was melted away from the earth; and many a night Janet awoke from her sleep with a cry, thinking she heard her daughter moaning, deep in the smooth ocean of snow, and could not find where she lay.

The occurrences of this dreadful night could not lessen the interest his cottage friends felt in Hugh; and a long winter passed with daily and lengthening communion both in study and in general conversation. I fear some of my younger readers will think my story slow; and say: "What! are they not going to fall in love with each other yet? We have been expecting it ever so long." I have two answers to make to this. The first is: "I do not pretend to know so much about love as you—excuse me—think you do; and must confess, I do not know whether they were in love with each other or not." The second is: "That I dare not pretend to understand thoroughly such a sacred mystery as the heart of Margaret; and I should feel it rather worse than presumptuous to talk as if I did. Even Hugh's is known to me only by gleams of light thrown, now and then, and here and there, upon it." Perhaps the two answers are only the same answer in different shapes.

Mrs. Glasford, however, would easily answer the question, if an answer is all that is wanted; for she, notwithstanding the facts of the story, which she could not fail to have heard correctly from the best authority, and notwithstanding the nature of the night, which might have seemed sufficient to overthrow her conclusions, uniformly remarked, as often as their escape was alluded to in her hearing,

"Lat them tak' it They had no business to be oot aboot thegither."

CHAPTER XV. TRANSITION

Tell me, bright boy, tell me, my golden lad, Whither away so frolic? Why so glad? What all thy wealth in council? all thy state? Are husks so dear? troth, 'tis a mighty rate.

RICHARD CRASHAW

The long Scotch winter passed by without any interruption to the growing friendship. But the spring brought a change; and Hugh was separated from his friends sooner than he had anticipated, by more than six months. For his mother wrote to him in great distress, in consequence of a claim made upon her for some debt which his father had contracted, very probably for Hugh's own sake. Hugh could not bear that any such should remain undischarged, or that his father's name should not rest in peace as well as his body and soul. He requested, therefore, from the laird, the amount due to him, and despatched almost the whole of it for the liquidation of this debt, so that he was now as unprovided as before for the expenses of the coming winter at Aberdeen. But, about the same time, a fellow-student wrote to him with news of a situation for the summer, worth three times as much as his present one, and to be procured through his friend's interest. Hugh having engaged himself to the laird only for the winter, although he had intended to stay till the commencement of the following session, felt that, although he would much rather remain where he was, he must not hesitate a moment to accept his friend's offer; and therefore wrote at once.

I will not attempt to describe the parting. It was very quiet, but very solemn and sad. Janet showed far more distress than Margaret, for she wept outright. The tears stood in David's eyes, as he grasped the youth's hand in silence. Margaret was very pale; that was all. As soon as Hugh disappeared with her father, who was going to walk with him to the village through which the coach passed, she hurried away, and went to the fir-wood for comfort.

Hugh found his new situation in Perthshire very different from the last. The heads of the family being themselves a lady and a gentleman, he found himself a gentleman too. He had more to do, but his work left him plenty of leisure notwithstanding. A good portion of his spare time he devoted to verse-making, to which he felt a growing impulse; and whatever may have been the merit of his compositions, they did him intellectual good at least, if it were only through the process of their construction. He wrote to David after his arrival, telling him all about his new situation; and received in return a letter from Margaret, written at her father's dictation. The mechanical part of letter-writing was rather laborious to David; but Margaret wrote well, in consequence of the number of papers, of one sort and another, which she had written for Hugh. Three or four letters more passed between them at lengthening intervals. Then they ceased—on Hugh's side first; until, when on the point of leaving for Aberdeen, feeling somewhat conscience-stricken at not having written for so long, he scribbled a note to inform them of his approaching departure, promising to let them know his address as soon as he found himself settled. Will it be believed that the session went by without the redemption of this pledge? Surely he could not have felt, to any approximate degree, the amount of obligation he was under to his humble friends. Perhaps, indeed, he may have thought that the obligation was principally on their side; as it would have been, if intellectual assistance could outweigh heart-kindness, and spiritual impulse and enlightenment; for, unconsciously in a great measure to himself, he had learned from David to regard in a new and more real aspect, many of those truths which he had hitherto received as true, and which yet had till then produced in him no other than a feeling of the common-place and uninteresting at the best.

Besides this, and many cognate advantages, a thousand seeds of truth must have surely remained in his mind, dropped there from the same tongue of wisdom, and only waiting the friendly aid of a

hard winter, breaking up the cold, selfish clods of clay, to share in the loveliness of a new spring, and be perfected in the beauty of a new summer.

However this may have been, it is certain that he forgot his old friends far more than he himself could have thought it possible he should; for, to make the best of it, youth is easily attracted and filled with the present show, and easily forgets that which, from distance in time or space, has no show to show. Spending his evenings in the midst of merry faces, and ready tongues fluent with the tones of jollity, if not always of wit, which glided sometimes into no too earnest discussion of the difficult subjects occupying their student hours; surrounded by the vapours of whisky-toddy, and the smoke of cutty pipes, till far into the short hours; then hurrying home, and lapsing into unrefreshing slumbers over intended study; or sitting up all night to prepare the tasks which had been neglected for a ball or an evening with Wilson, the great interpreter of Scottish song—it is hardly to be wondered at that he should lose the finer consciousness of higher powers and deeper feelings, not from any behaviour in itself wrong, but from the hurry, noise, and tumult in the streets of life, that, penetrating too deep into the house of life, dazed and stupefied the silent and lonely watcher in the chamber of conscience, far apart. He had no time to think or feel.

The session drew to a close. He eschewed all idleness; shut himself up, after class hours, with his books; ate little, studied hard, slept irregularly, working always best between midnight and two in the morning; carried the first honours in most of his classes; and at length breathed freely, but with a dizzy brain, and a face that revealed, in pale cheeks, and red, weary eyes, the results of an excess of mental labour—an excess which is as injurious as any other kind of intemperance, the moral degradation alone kept out of view. Proud of his success, he sat down and wrote a short note, with a simple statement of it, to David; hoping, in his secret mind, that he would attribute his previous silence to an absorption in study which had not existed before the end of the session was quite at hand. Now that he had more time for reflection, he could not bear the idea that that noble rustic face should look disapprovingly or, still worse, coldly upon him; and he could not help feeling as if the old ploughman had taken the place of his father, as the only man of whom he must stand in awe, and who had a right to reprove him. He did reprove him now, though unintentionally. For David was delighted at having such good news from him; and the uneasiness which he had felt, but never quite expressed, was almost swept away in the conclusion, that it was unreasonable to expect the young man to give his time to them both absent and present, especially when he had been occupied to such good purpose as this letter signified. So he was nearly at peace about him—though not quite. Hugh received from him the following letter in reply to his; dictated, as usual, to his secretary, Margaret:—

“MY DEAR SIR,

“Ye’ll be a great man some day, gin ye haud at it. But things maunna be gotten at the outlay o’ mair than they’re worth. Ye’ll ken what I mean. An’ there’s better things nor bein’ a great man, efter a’. Forgie the liberty I tak’ in remin’in’ ye o’ sic like. I’m only remin’in’ ye o’ what ye ken weel aneuch. But ye’re a brave lad, an’ ye hae been an unco frien’ to me an’ mine; an’ I pray the Lord to thank ye for me, for ye hae dune muckle guid to his bairns—meanin’ me an’ mine. It’s verra kin’ o’ ye to vrite till’s in the verra moment o’ victory; but weel ye kent that amid a’ yer frien’s—an’ ye canna fail to hae mony a ane, wi’ a head an’ a face like yours—there was na ane—na, no ane, that wad rejoice mair ower your success than Janet, or my doo, Maggie, or yer ain auld obleeged frien’ an’ servant,

“DAVID ELGINBROD

“P.S.—We’re a’ weel, an’ unco blythe at your letter.

“Maggy—

"P.S. 2.—Dear Mr. Sutherland,—I wrote all the above at my father's dictation, and just as he said it, for I thought you would like his Scotch better than my English. My mother and I myself are rejoiced at the good news. My mother fairly grat outright. I gaed out to the tree where I met you first. I wonder sair sometimes if you was the angel I was to meet in the fir-wood. I am,

"Your obedient servant,

"MARGARET ELGINBROD."

This letter certainly touched Hugh. But he could not help feeling rather offended that David should write to him in such a warning tone. He had never addressed him in this fashion when he saw him every day. Indeed, David could not very easily have spoken to him thus. But writing is a different thing; and men who are not much accustomed to use a pen, often assume a more solemn tone in doing so, as if it were a ceremony that required state. As for David, having been a little uneasy about Hugh, and not much afraid of offending him—for he did not know his weaknesses very thoroughly, and did not take into account the effect of the very falling away which he dreaded, in increasing in him pride, and that impatience of the gentlest reproof natural to every man—he felt considerably relieved after he had discharged his duty in this memento vivere. But one of the results, and a very unexpected one, was, that a yet longer period elapsed before Hugh wrote again to David. He meant to do so, and meant to do so; but, as often as the thought occurred to him, was checked both by consciousness and by pride. So much contributes, not the evil alone that is in us, but the good also sometimes, to hold us back from doing the thing we ought to do.

It now remained for Hugh to look about for some occupation. The state of his funds rendered immediate employment absolutely necessary; and as there was only one way in which he could earn money without yet further preparation, he must betake himself to that way, as he had done before, in the hope that it would lead to something better. At all events, it would give him time to look about him, and make up his mind for the future. Many a one, to whom the occupation of a tutor is far more irksome than it was to Hugh, is compelled to turn his acquirements to this immediate account; and, once going in this groove, can never get out of it again. But Hugh was hopeful enough to think, that his reputation at the university would stand him in some stead; and, however much he would have disliked the thought of being a tutor all his days, occupying a kind of neutral territory between the position of a gentleman and that of a menial, he had enough of strong Saxon good sense to prevent him, despite his Highland pride, from seeing any great hardship in labouring still for a little while, as he had laboured hitherto. But he hoped to find a situation more desirable than either of those he had occupied before; and, with this expectation, looked towards the South, as most Scotchmen do, indulging the national impulse to spoil the Egyptians. Nor did he look long, sending his tentacles afloat in every direction, before he heard, through means of a college friend, of just such a situation as he wanted, in the family of a gentleman of fortune in the county of Surrey, not much more than twenty miles from London. This he was fortunate enough to obtain without difficulty.

Margaret was likewise on the eve of a change. She stood like a young fledged bird on the edge of the nest, ready to take its first long flight. It was necessary that she should do something for herself, not so much from the compulsion of immediate circumstances, as in prospect of the future. Her father was not an old man, but at best he could leave only a trifle at his death; and if Janet outlived him, she would probably require all that, and what labour she would then be capable of as well, to support herself. Margaret was anxious, too, though not to be independent, yet, not to be burdensome. Both David and Janet saw that, by her peculiar tastes and habits, she had separated herself so far from the circle around her, that she could never hope to be quite comfortable in that neighbourhood. It was not that by any means she despised or refused the labours common to the young women of the country; but, all things considered, they thought that something more suitable for her might be procured.

The laird's lady continued to behave to her in the most supercilious fashion. The very day of Hugh's departure, she had chanced to meet Margaret walking alone with a book, this time unopened, in her hand. Mrs. Glasford stopped. Margaret stopped too, expecting to be addressed. The lady looked at her, all over, from head to foot, as if critically examining the appearance of an animal she thought of purchasing; then, without a word, but with a contemptuous toss of the head, passed on, leaving poor Margaret both angry and ashamed.

But David was much respected by the gentry of the neighbourhood, with whom his position, as the laird's steward, brought him not unfrequently into contact; and to several of them he mentioned his desire of finding some situation for Margaret. Janet could not bear the idea of her lady-bairn leaving them, to encounter the world alone; but David, though he could not help sometimes feeling a similar pang, was able to take to himself hearty comfort from the thought, that if there was any safety for her in her father's house, there could not be less in her heavenly Father's, in any nook of which she was as full in His eye, and as near His heart, as in their own cottage. He felt that anxiety in this case, as in every other, would just be a lack of confidence in God, to suppose which justifiable would be equivalent to saying that He had not fixed the foundations of the earth that it should not be moved; that He was not the Lord of Life, nor the Father of His children; in short, that a sparrow could fall to the ground without Him, and that the hairs of our head are not numbered. Janet admitted all this, but sighed nevertheless. So did David too, at times; for he knew that the sparrow must fall; that many a divine truth is hard to learn, all-blessed as it is when learned; and that sorrow and suffering must come to Margaret, ere she could be fashioned into the perfection of a child of the kingdom. Still, she was as safe abroad as at home.

An elderly lady of fortune was on a visit to one of the families in the neighbourhood. She was in want of a lady's-maid, and it occurred to the housekeeper that Margaret might suit her. This was not quite what her parents would have chosen, but they allowed her to go and see the lady. Margaret was delighted with the benevolent-looking gentlewoman; and she, on her part, was quite charmed with Margaret. It was true she knew nothing of the duties of the office; but the present maid, who was leaving on the best of terms, would soon initiate her into its mysteries. And David and Janet were so much pleased with Margaret's account of the interview, that David himself went to see the lady. The sight of him only increased her desire to have Margaret, whom she said she would treat like a daughter, if only she were half as good as she looked. Before David left her, the matter was arranged; and within a month, Margaret was borne in her mistress's carriage, away from father and mother and cottage-home.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK

BOOK II. ARNSTEAD

The earth hath bubbles as the water has

MACBETH.—I.3

CHAPTER I. A NEW HOME

A wise man's home is whereso'er he's wise.
JOHN MARSTON.—Antonio's Revenge.

Hugh left the North dead in the arms of grey winter, and found his new abode already alive in the breath of the west wind. As he walked up the avenue to the house, he felt that the buds were breaking all about, though, the night being dark and cloudy, the green shadows of the coming spring were invisible.

He was received at the hall-door, and shown to his room, by an old, apparently confidential, and certainly important butler; whose importance, however, was inoffensive, as founded, to all appearance, on a sense of family and not of personal dignity. Refreshment was then brought him, with the message that, as it was late, Mr. Arnold would defer the pleasure of meeting him till the morning at breakfast.

Left to himself, Hugh began to look around him. Everything suggested a contrast between his present position and that which he had first occupied about the same time of the year at Turriepuffit. He was in an old handsome room of dark wainscot, furnished like a library, with book-cases about the walls. One of them, with glass doors, had an ancient escritoire underneath, which was open, and evidently left empty for his use. A fire was burning cheerfully in an old high grate; but its light, though assisted by that of two wax candles on the table, failed to show the outlines of the room, it was so large and dark. The ceiling was rather low in proportion, and a huge beam crossed it. At one end, an open door revealed a room beyond, likewise lighted with fire and candles. Entering, he found this to be an equally old-fashioned bedroom, to which his luggage had been already conveyed.

"As far as creature comforts go," thought Hugh, "I have fallen on my feet." He rang the bell, had the tray removed, and then proceeded to examine the book-cases. He found them to contain much of the literature with which he was most desirous of making an acquaintance. A few books of the day were interspersed. The sense of having good companions in the authors around him, added greatly to his feeling of comfort; and he retired for the night filled with pleasant anticipations of his sojourn at Arnstead. All the night, however, his dreams were of wind and snow, and Margaret out in them alone. Janet was waiting in the cottage for him to bring her home. He had found her, but could not move her; for the spirit of the storm had frozen her to ice, and she was heavy as a marble statue.

When he awoke, the shadows of boughs and budding twigs were waving in changeful network-tracery, across the bright sunshine on his window-curtains. Before he was called he was ready to go down; and to amuse himself till breakfast-time, he proceeded to make another survey of the books. He concluded that these must be a colony from the mother-library; and also that the room must, notwithstanding, be intended for his especial occupation, seeing his bedroom opened out of it. Next, he looked from all the windows, to discover into what kind of a furrow on the face of the old earth he had fallen. All he could see was trees and trees. But oh! how different from the sombre, dark, changeless fir-wood at Turriepuffit! whose trees looked small and shrunken in his memory, beside this glory of boughs, breaking out into their prophecy of an infinite greenery at hand. His rooms seemed to occupy the end of a small wing at the back of the house, as well as he could judge. His sitting-room windows looked across a small space to another wing; and the windows of his bedroom, which were at right-angles to those of the former, looked full into what seemed an ordered ancient forest of gracious trees of all kinds, coming almost close to the very windows. They were the trees which had been throwing their shadows on these windows for two or three hours of the silent spring sunlight, at once so liquid and so dazzling. Then he resolved to test his faculty for discovery, by seeing whether he could find his way to the breakfast-room without a guide. In this he would have succeeded without much difficulty, for it opened from the main-entrance hall, to which the huge square-turned

oak staircase, by which he had ascended, led; had it not been for the somewhat intricate nature of the passages leading from the wing in which his rooms were (evidently an older and more retired portion of the house) to the main staircase itself. After opening many doors and finding no thoroughfare, he became convinced that, in place of finding a way on, he had lost the way back. At length he came to a small stair, which led him down to a single door. This he opened, and straightway found himself in the library, a long, low, silent-looking room, every foot of the walls of which was occupied with books in varied and rich bindings. The lozenge-paned windows, with thick stone mullions, were much overgrown with ivy, throwing a cool green shadowiness into the room. One of them, however, had been altered to a more modern taste, and opened with folding-doors upon a few steps, descending into an old-fashioned, terraced garden. To approach this window he had to pass a table, lying on which he saw a paper with verses on it, evidently in a woman's hand, and apparently just written, for the ink of the corrective scores still glittered. Just as he reached the window, which stood open, a lady had almost gained it from the other side, coming up the steps from the garden. She gave a slight start when she saw him, looked away, and as instantly glanced towards him again. Then approaching him through the window, for he had retreated to allow her to enter, she bowed with a kind of studied ease, and a slight shade of something French in her manner. Her voice was very pleasing, almost bewitching; yet had, at the same time, something assumed, if not affected, in the tone. All this was discoverable, or rather spiritually palpable, in the two words she said—merely, "Mr. Sutherland?" interrogatively. Hugh bowed, and said:

"I am very glad you have found me, for I had quite lost myself. I doubt whether I should ever have reached the breakfast-room."

"Come this way," she rejoined.

As they passed the table on which the verses lay, she stopped and slipped them into a writing-case. Leading him through a succession of handsome, evidently modern passages, she brought him across the main hall to the breakfast-room, which looked in the opposite direction to the library, namely, to the front of the house. She rang the bell; the urn was brought in; and she proceeded at once to make the tea; which she did well, rising in Hugh's estimation thereby. Before he had time, however, to make his private remarks on her exterior, or his conjectures on her position in the family, Mr. Arnold entered the room, with a slow, somewhat dignified step, and a dull outlook of grey eyes from a grey head well-balanced on a tall, rather slender frame. The lady rose, and, addressing him as uncle, bade him good morning; a greeting which he returned cordially, with a kiss on her forehead. Then accosting Hugh, with a manner which seemed the more polite and cold after the tone in which he had spoken to his niece, he bade him welcome to Arnstead.

"I trust you were properly attended to last night, Mr. Sutherland? Your pupil wanted very much to sit up till you arrived, but he is altogether too delicate, I am sorry to say, for late hours, though he has an unfortunate preference for them himself. Jacob," (to the man in waiting), "is not Master Harry up yet?"

Master Harry's entrance at that moment rendered reply unnecessary.

"Good morning, Euphra," he said to the lady, and kissed her on the cheek.

"Good morning, dear," was the reply, accompanied by a pretence of returning the kiss. But she smiled with a kind of confectionary sweetness on him; and, dropping an additional lump of sugar into his tea at the same moment, placed it for him beside herself; while he went and shook hands with his father, and then glancing shyly up at Hugh from a pair of large dark eyes, put his hand in his, and smiled, revealing teeth of a pearly whiteness. The lips, however, did not contrast them sufficiently, being pale and thin, with indication of suffering in their tremulous lines. Taking his place at table, he trifled with his breakfast; and after making pretence of eating for a while, asked Euphra if he might go. She giving him leave, he hastened away.

Mr. Arnold took advantage of his retreat to explain to Hugh what he expected of him with regard to the boy.

"How old would you take Harry to be, Mr. Sutherland?"

"I should say about twelve from his size," replied Hugh; "but from his evident bad health, and intelligent expression—"

"Ah! you perceive the state he is in," interrupted Mr. Arnold, with some sadness in his voice. "You are right; he is nearly fifteen. He has not grown half-an-inch in the last twelve months."

"Perhaps that is better than growing too fast," said Hugh.

"Perhaps—perhaps; we will hope so. But I cannot help being uneasy about him. He reads too much, and I have not yet been able to help it; for he seems miserable, and without any object in life, if I compel him to leave his books."

"Perhaps we can manage to get over that in a little while."

"Besides," Mr. Arnold went on, paying no attention to what Hugh said, "I can get him to take no exercise. He does not even care for riding. I bought him a second pony a month ago, and he has not been twice on its back yet."

Hugh could not help thinking that to increase the supply was not always the best mode of increasing the demand; and that one who would not ride the first pony, would hardly be likely to ride the second. Mr. Arnold concluded with the words:

"I don't want to stop the boy's reading, but I can't have him a milksop."

"Will you let me manage him as I please, Mr. Arnold?" Hugh ventured to say.

Mr. Arnold looked full at him, with a very slight but quite manifest expression of surprise; and Hugh was aware that the eyes of the lady, called by the boy Euphra, were likewise fixed upon him penetratingly. As if he were then for the first time struck by the manly development of Hugh's frame, Mr. Arnold answered:

"I don't want you to overdo it, either. You cannot make a muscular Christian of him." (The speaker smiled at his own imagined wit.) "The boy has talents, and I want him to use them."

"I will do my best for him both ways," answered Hugh, "if you will trust me. For my part, I think the only way is to make the operation of the intellectual tendency on the one side, reveal to the boy himself his deficiency on the other. This once done, all will be well."

As he said this, Hugh caught sight of a cloudy, inscrutable dissatisfaction slightly contracting the eyebrows of the lady. Mr. Arnold, however, seemed not to be altogether displeased.

"Well," he answered, "I have my plans; but let us see first what you can do with yours. If they fail, perhaps you will oblige me by trying mine."

This was said with the decisive politeness of one who is accustomed to have his own way, and fully intends to have it—every word as articulate and deliberate as organs of speech could make it. But he seemed at the same time somewhat impressed by Hugh, and not unwilling to yield.

Throughout the conversation, the lady had said nothing, but had sat watching, or rather scrutinizing, Hugh's countenance, with a far keener and more frequent glance than, I presume, he was at all aware of. Whether or not she was satisfied with her conclusions, she allowed no sign to disclose; but, breakfast being over, rose and withdrew, turning, however, at the door, and saying:

"When you please, Mr. Sutherland, I shall be glad to show you what Harry has been doing with me; for till now I have been his only tutor."

"Thank you," replied Hugh; "but for some time we shall be quite independent of school-books. Perhaps we may require none at all. He can read, I presume, fairly well?"

"Reading is not only his forte but his fault," replied Mr. Arnold; while Euphra, fixing one more piercing look upon him, withdrew.

"Yes," responded Hugh; "but a boy may shuffle through a book very quickly, and have no such accurate perceptions of even the mere words, as to be able to read aloud intelligibly."

How little this applied to Harry, Hugh was soon to learn.

“Well, you know best about these things, I daresay. I leave it to you. With such testimonials as you have, Mr. Sutherland, I can hardly be wrong in letting you try your own plans with him. Now, I must bid you good morning. You will, in all probability, find Harry in the library.”

CHAPTER II. HARRY'S NEW HORSE

Spielender Unterricht heisst nicht, dem Kinde Anstrengungen ersparen und abnehmen, sondern eine Leidenschaft in ihm erwecken, welche ihm die stärksten aufnöthigt und erleichtert.
JEAN PAUL.—Die Unsichtbare Loge.

It is not the intention of sportive instruction that the child should be spared effort, or delivered from it; but that thereby a passion should be wakened in him, which shall both necessitate and facilitate the strongest exertion.

Hugh made no haste to find his pupil in the library; thinking it better, with such a boy, not to pounce upon him as if he were going to educate him directly. He went to his own rooms instead; got his books out and arranged them,—supplying thus, in a very small degree, the scarcity of modern ones in the book-cases; then arranged his small wardrobe, looked about him a little, and finally went to seek his pupil.

He found him in the library, as he had been given to expect, coiled up on the floor in a corner, with his back against the book-shelves, and an old folio on his knees, which he was reading in silence.

"Well, Harry," said Hugh, in a half-indifferent tone, as he threw himself on a couch, "what are you reading?"

Harry had not heard him come in. He started, and almost shuddered; then looked up, hesitated, rose, and, as if ashamed to utter the name of the book, brought it to Hugh, opening it at the title-page as he held it out to him. It was the old romance of Polexander. Hugh knew nothing about it; but, glancing over some of the pages, could not help wondering that the boy should find it interesting.

"Do you like this very much?" said he.

"Well—no. Yes, rather."

"I think I could find you something more interesting in the book-shelves."

"Oh! please, sir, mayn't I read this?" pleaded Harry, with signs of distress in his pale face.

"Oh, yes, certainly, if you wish. But tell me why you want to read it so very much."

"Because I have set myself to read it through."

Hugh saw that the child was in a diseased state of mind, as well as of body.

"You should not set yourself to read anything, before you know whether it is worth reading."

"I could not help it. I was forced to say I would."

"To whom?"

"To myself. Mayn't I read it?"

"Certainly," was all Hugh's answer; for he saw that he must not pursue the subject at present: the boy was quite hypochondriacal. His face was keen, with that clear definition of feature which suggests superior intellect. He was, though very small for his age, well proportioned, except that his head and face were too large. His forehead indicated thought; and Hugh could not doubt that, however uninteresting the books which he read might be, they must have afforded him subjects of mental activity. But he could not help seeing as well, that this activity, if not altered in its direction and modified in its degree, would soon destroy itself, either by ruining his feeble constitution altogether, or, which was more to be feared, by irremediably injuring the action of the brain. He resolved, however, to let him satisfy his conscience by reading the book; hoping, by the introduction of other objects of thought and feeling, to render it so distasteful, that he would be in little danger of yielding a similar pledge again, even should the temptation return, which Hugh hoped to prevent.

"But you have read enough for the present, have you not?" said he, rising, and approaching the book-shelves.

"Yes; I have been reading since breakfast."

"Ah! there's a capital book. Have you ever read it—Gulliver's Travels?"

"No. The outside looked always so uninteresting."

"So does Polexander's outside."

"Yes. But I couldn't help that one."

"Well, come along. I will read to you."

"Oh! thank you. That will be delightful. But must we not go to our lessons?"

"I'm going to make a lesson of this. I have been talking to your papa; and we're going to begin with a holiday, instead of ending with one. I must get better acquainted with you first, Harry, before I can teach you right. We must be friends, you know."

The boy crept close up to him, laid one thin hand on his knee, looked in his face for a moment, and then, without a word, sat down on the couch close beside him. Before an hour had passed, Harry was laughing heartily at Gulliver's adventures amongst the Lilliputians. Having arrived at this point of success, Hugh ceased reading, and began to talk to him.

"Is that lady your cousin?"

"Yes. Isn't she beautiful?"

"I hardly know yet. I have not got used to her enough yet. What is her name?"

"Oh! such a pretty name—Euphrasia."

"Is she the only lady in the house?"

"Yes; my mamma is dead, you know. She was ill for a long time, they say; and she died when I was born."

The tears came in the poor boy's eyes. Hugh thought of his own father, and put his hand on Harry's shoulder. Harry laid his head on Hugh's shoulder.

"But," he went on, "Euphra is so kind to me! And she is so clever too! She knows everything."

"Have you no brothers or sisters?"

"No, none. I wish I had."

"Well, I'll be your big brother. Only you must mind what I say to you; else I shall stop being him. Is it a bargain?"

"Yes, to be sure!" cried Harry in delight; and, springing from the couch, he began hopping feebly about the room on one foot, to express his pleasure.

"Well, then, that's settled. Now, you must come and show me the horses—your ponies, you know—and the pigs—"

"I don't like the pigs—I don't know where they are."

"Well, we must find out. Perhaps I shall make some discoveries for you. Have you any rabbits?"

"No."

"A dog though, surely?"

"No. I had a canary, but the cat killed it, and I have never had a pet since."

"Well, get your cap, and come out with me. I will wait for you here."

Harry walked away—he seldom ran. He soon returned with his cap, and they sallied out together.

Happening to look back at the house, when a few paces from it, Hugh thought he saw Euphra standing at the window of a back staircase. They made the round of the stables, and the cow-house, and the poultry-yard; and even the pigs, as proposed, came in for a share of their attention. As they approached the stye, Harry turned away his head with a look of disgust. They were eating out of the trough.

"They make such a nasty noise!" he said.

"Yes, but just look: don't they enjoy it?" said Hugh.

Harry looked at them. The notion of their enjoyment seemed to dawn upon him as something quite new. He went nearer and nearer to the stye. At last a smile broke out over his countenance.

"How tight that one curls his tail!" said he, and burst out laughing.

"How dreadfully this boy must have been mismanaged!" thought Hugh to himself. "But there is no fear of him now, I hope."

By this time they had been wandering about for more than an hour; and Hugh saw, by Harry's increased paleness, that he was getting tired.

"Here, Harry, get on my back, my boy, and have a ride. You're tired."

And Hugh knelt down.

Harry shrunk back.

"I shall spoil your coat with my shoes."

"Nonsense! Rub them well on the grass there. And then get on my back directly."

Harry did as he was bid, and found his tutor's broad back and strong arms a very comfortable saddle. So away they went, wandering about for a long time, in their new relation of horse and his rider. At length they got into the middle of a long narrow avenue, quite neglected, overgrown with weeds, and obstructed with rubbish. But the trees were fine beeches, of great growth and considerable age. One end led far into a wood, and the other towards the house, a small portion of which could be seen at the end, the avenue appearing to reach close up to it.

"Don't go down this," said Harry.

"Well, it's not a very good road for a horse certainly, but I think I can go it. What a beautiful avenue! Why is it so neglected?"

"Don't go down there, please, dear horse."

Harry was getting wonderfully at home with Hugh already.

"Why?" asked Hugh.

"They call it the Ghost's Walk, and I don't much like it. It has a strange distracted look!"

"That's a long word, and a descriptive one too," thought Hugh; but, considering that there would come many a better opportunity of combating the boy's fears than now, he simply said: "Very well, Harry,"—and proceeded to leave the avenue by the other side. But Harry was not yet satisfied.

"Please, Mr. Sutherland, don't go on that side, just now. Ride me back, please. It is not safe, they say, to cross her path. She always follows any one who crosses her path."

Hugh laughed; but again said, "Very well, my boy;" and, returning, left the avenue by the side by which he had entered it.

"Shall we go home to luncheon now?" said Harry.

"Yes," replied Hugh. "Could we not go by the front of the house? I should like very much to see it."

"Oh, certainly," said Harry, and proceeded to direct Hugh how to go; but evidently did not know quite to his own satisfaction. There being, however, but little foliage yet, Hugh could discover his way pretty well. He promised himself many a delightful wander in the woody regions in the evenings.

They managed to get round to the front of the house, not without some difficulty; and then Hugh saw to his surprise that, although not imposing in appearance, it was in extent more like a baronial residence than that of a simple gentleman. The front was very long, apparently of all ages, and of all possible styles of architecture, the result being somewhat mysterious and eminently picturesque. All kinds of windows; all kinds of projections and recesses; a house here, joined to a hall there; here a pointed gable, the very bell on the top overgrown and apparently choked with ivy; there a wide front with large bay windows; and next a turret of old stone, with not a shred of ivy upon it, but crowded over with grey-green lichens, which looked as if the stone itself had taken to growing; multitudes of roofs, of all shapes and materials, so that one might very easily be lost amongst the chimneys and gutters and dormer windows and pinnacles—made up the appearance of the house on the outside to Hugh's first inquiring glance, as he paused at a little distance with Harry on his back, and scanned the wonderful pile before him. But as he looked at the house of Arnstead, Euphra was looking at him with the boy on his back, from one of the smaller windows. Was she making up her mind?

“You are as kind to me as Euphra,” said Harry, as Hugh set him down in the hall. “I’ve enjoyed my ride very much, thank you, Mr. Sutherland. I am sure Euphra will like you very much—she likes everybody.”

CHAPTER III. EUPHRASIA

then purged with Euphrasy and Rue
The visual nerve, for he had much to see.

Paradise Lost, b. xi.

Soft music came to mine ear. It was like the rising breeze, that whirls, at first, the thistle's beard; then flies, dark-shadowy, over the grass. It was the maid of Fuärfed wild: she raised the nightly song; for she knew that my soul was a stream, that flowed at pleasant sounds.
Ossian.—Oina-Morul.

Harry led Hugh by the hand to the dining-room, a large oak hall with Gothic windows, and an open roof supported by richly carved woodwork, in the squares amidst which were painted many escutcheons parted by fanciful devices. Over the high stone carving above the chimney hung an old piece of tapestry, occupying the whole space between that and the roof. It represented a hunting-party of ladies and gentlemen, just setting out. The table looked very small in the centre of the room, though it would have seated twelve or fourteen. It was already covered for luncheon; and in a minute Euphra entered and took her place without a word. Hugh sat on one side and Harry on the other. Euphra, having helped both to soup, turned to Harry and said, "Well, Harry, I hope you have enjoyed your first lesson."

"Very much," answered Harry with a smile. "I have learned pigs and horseback."

"The boy is positively clever," thought Hugh.

"Mr. Sutherland"—he continued, "has begun to teach me to like creatures."

"But I thought you were very fond of your wild-beast book, Harry."

"Oh! yes; but that was only in the book, you know. I like the stories about them, of course. But to like pigs, you know, is quite different. They are so ugly and ill-bred. I like them though."

"You seem to have quite gained Harry already," said Euphra, glancing at Hugh, and looking away as quickly.

"We are very good friends, and shall be, I think," replied he.

Harry looked at him affectionately, and said to him, not to Euphra, "Oh! yes, that we shall, I am sure." Then turning to the lady—"Do you know, Euphra, he is my big brother?"

"You must mind how you make new relations, though, Harry; for you know that would make him my cousin."

"Well, you will be a kind cousin to him, won't you?"

"I will try," replied Euphra, looking up at Hugh with a naïve expression of shyness, and the slightest possible blush.

Hugh began to think her pretty, almost handsome. His next thought was to wonder how old she was. But about this he could not at once make up his mind. She might be four-and-twenty; she might be two-and-thirty. She had black, lustreless hair, and eyes to match, as far as colour was concerned—but they could sparkle, and probably flash upon occasion; a low forehead, but very finely developed in the faculties that dwell above the eyes; slender but very dark eyebrows—just black arched lines in her rather sallow complexion; nose straight, and nothing remarkable—"an excellent thing in woman," a mouth indifferent when at rest, but capable of a beautiful laugh. She was rather tall, and of a pretty enough figure; hands good; feet invisible. Hugh came to these conclusions rapidly enough, now that his attention was directed to her; for, though naturally unobservant, his perception was very acute as soon as his attention was roused.

"Thank you," he replied to her pretty speech. "I shall do my best to deserve it."

"I hope you will, Mr. Sutherland," rejoined she, with another arch look. "Take some wine, Harry."

She poured out a glass of sherry, and gave it to the boy, who drank it with some eagerness. Hugh could not approve of this, but thought it too early to interfere. Turning to Harry, he said:

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.