

knew that she had come back to her own place, and that here for what remained of life her work would lie.

She did not know whether she was sad or glad, her heart being so bruised in her breast, only she felt that she had come home.

The door through which she had so often passed flew at her soft touch, and she stood just a moment on the threshold looking in. Janet Aiken, after the manner of her kind, deep-dyed with all the traditions and the grim panoply of death, had drawn down every blind in the manse, so that the minister sat in darkness. Alison, swift of foot, crossed the room, and with no uncertain hand touched the cord so that the blind flew up, and at the moment a feeble ray of wintry sun struggling from behind a bank of sullen cloud streamed in, and touched the fair hair of the man who sat before his desk with his head bowed low, and the absolute bitterness of death in his soul. The sister, who had so long mothered him, and whom he had never needed more than now, looked upon him for a moment with a mighty and encompassing pity and a trembling of the lip which betokened how her being was stirred.

Presently she was at his side, and her hand touched his ruddy hair, and her tender voice broke the dreary silence.

"Pat, look up," she said bravely. "Look up."

He flung himself to his feet, and his eyes dazed with their anguish smote her pitying face.

"It isn't fair, Ailie!" he cried, "it isn't fair! What have I done to be so punished? I have tried to live well, to do my duty, and—and to have her for such a little while, and then the darkness of hell! It's horrible! There is no God; there can't be! I will not believe in Him any more! I will join hands with those who have no use for Him."

"My dear! My dear!"

No more, and no less, could she say for a space, but