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[For the Poor and True Witnesses.]

WAITING FOR THE TRAIN.

BY AGNES BURT.

(Conclusion.) As we neared the clump of maples the path merged into a broad avenue, bordered on each side by tall stately trees, at the end of which lay the house, a perfect picture of rural beauty, its white walls contrasting with green lawns and broad meadows which ran all around it. On the lawn were tastefully placed large garden vases, or urns, from which depended trailing vines and richly colored geraniums.

"You'll come in and rest ye, neebor, for the day's warm, and myself'll be gay glad, to see any body frae the hills. Look ye, you see'st the wain for us in the doorway, and the wistful eyes of the aged woman fastened on my face with a strange longing I could not resist."

"Aye, aye, I'll tent an' bide w' ye, syne ye wish it," I answered. While still speaking, I observed the lady in the doorway was coming down the steps, evidently to welcome the stranger.

"I am truly glad to see our mother has met an old friend," was her greeting, as she pressed my hand cordially.

"This is my dochter-in-law, Mysie Caverhill, Allan's guld wife; an' neebor, I dinna' min' ye'r name, what was't?"

"Miss Harland," said her son, who was just beside us; "and I hope we may be able to persuade her to make us a visit."

"At once I understood the hope that had sprung up in the speaker's heart for his mother's restoration; and right willingly did I accept the invitation so that I might aid in the work.

It was a cheerful, happy luxurious home into which I found myself so unexpectedly ushered. Good order and perfect housekeeping in every detail. The servants, or help, as they call them, moved around in their respective duties—more like the trained domestics of some baronial residence we read of in Europe than those of a farm house in Vermont. But, as the station-master informed me, young Mrs. Caverhill was an heiress and a genuine lady at heart. The perfect harmony on all sides showed that good taste and wealth worked hand in hand. One could see at a glance how the dear old demured mother was first considered in everything; when, as the hostess, Mrs. Caverhill, wished to carry me off to the apartment set aside for visitors, she placed her arm caressingly around the aged form, saying, "Only for a few minutes, dear mother; until Miss Harland removes her hat and shawl."

"Aye, aye; dinna' side lang," was her response.

"Let there be no ceremony between us, Miss Harland," she eagerly said, as we passed down the corridor. "I feel as if Providence had sent you specially to us. Allan has whispered a few words to me, how mother has taken to you. No doubt you are already informed through the Station Master of the great bereavement that has shattered her reason. I cannot tell you how I felt when I seen her dear old face turned on yours, and her hand clasping your arm as you came up the lawn together. You are the first person she has shown any interest in since her arrival from Scotland."

"Dear madam, I am only too happy to do anything that lies in my power. Only just tell me what you wish me to do."

"Stay with us as long as you can," was her eager reply. "I know it will appear selfish, as, no doubt, you have other demands on your time, other friends to think about; but our extreme case will plead my excuse. The Scotch accent that comes so easy to your tongue has roused something in her dulled, clouded mind that makes both Allan and myself hope against hope."

"Are you a native of Scotland?" she continued.

"No, I was born in Montreal, Canada, but of Scotch parents; and from childhood it has been my delight to copy and imitate the accent used by my mother. Border tales and ballads, quaint delineations, Burns' songs and poetry, has been a continual source of enjoyment. And, now, so long as I can remain with you, Mrs. Caverhill, I am only too happy to help all I can. But, tell me, do the Doctors think there is no hope for her recovery?"

"They all agree in the one answer, and we have had the best medical skill brought to bear on her case. Nothing in science can do her any good, probably she will slip away like a child going to sleep, with her darling's name on her lips. But since I have seen her eager look fastened on your face, I will hope against all their learned and wise decisions."

Returning to the pleasant airy parlor, we found the mother coming in search of us, saying, "Mysie, lassie, dinna' keep my neebor sae lang frae me."

Mysie caught my hand and pressed it almost hysterically at this confirmation of her sanguine hopes.

I had no plan marked out to follow, but inwardly offering a prayer for divine direction for each word I should say, sat down beside the old lady on a low ottoman, when with childlike eagerness she began:

"Did ye come frae the day, neebor; an' what's the folk cuden in yer part on the kintyre?"

I told her the reason of my delay at the station, and the kindness of the Station-master and his wife; that a messenger would soon come for me, but that if she wished it I would send him away, and make her a long visit. In telling her this I used the same broad Scotch accent I had first spoken to her in.

"Aye, dae, I wish it, w' ae' my heart. Ye mauna luv' me, no that ye'v cam. I could ne' thole that at ae'."

The dear old soul bubbled and talked of the scenes of her early life; and were it not that some of the places were familiar, from the many times I had heard my mother describe them and the motley collection I had read of old fashioned Scotch legends and stories, I would have been, many times, at a loss to keep her in replies.

Now and then Mrs. Caverhill joined us and listened with evident pleasure, occasionally remarking something that seemed to give the old lady great delight.

up the mountains to a particular bend in one of the green gullies, as some tourists call our hills, where just about sunset nature seems to surpass all attempts at artistic imitation.

"I'll no bide lang frae ye, mither; I whispured, in answer to her eager questioning glance.

"Mind bring her back the night, Allan, lad," was the sad, sweet refrain of her quavering voice.

"Miss Harland," said my host, as we drove under the spreading maples, "words are too feeble to express Mrs. Caverhill's thanks and mine for your kindness in giving your time to cheer the darkened way of my afflicted mother. But to the truly generous Christian heart, thanks are futile. May your efforts to lighten her weight of sorrow meet the same consideration from those around you."

"And now," he added, in a lighter tone, "I have done thanking, as I know it is not pleasing. I will only say, as the Indian chiefs say when they meet in council and each Sachem or head of his tribe concludes his speech with 'I have spoken.'"

Just then he drew the rein, and the horse obeyed the check. "Look, Miss Harland; can there be anything to surpass that sight in picture land?"

Midway up one of the mountains, just where an opening gave a view of the range of lower hills with rich farms, meadows and pastures on their sides and between them, threaded with silver streams and waterfalls gleaming in the rosy light as they leaped from rock to rock in their downward course. Then, up almost to where we rested, came the floods of golden haze, blending into pale amber, deep rose, melting out into an exquisite pink, purple, passing in ripples and waves of anything. Such a gorgeous commingling of hues and shades was sufficient cause to bring lovers of the beautiful from many lands to enjoy the sight. We waited until the last gleam of sunlight died away ere we returned. On the way he gave me some particulars of his mother's loss of mind.

"My youngest brother, Alec, was her idol, as youngest sons generally are, but he was a worthy son; a generous, warm-hearted, handsome young man, and loving his mother above all beings on earth. Nothing too good or too handsome for her use; he dearly loved to dress her in the tartan she still wears; and invariably he sent or brought with him—from Aberdeen, the town where his employment lay, a dress and coat to match for his

"Bonnie wee mither," as he loved to call her. As soon as the least fear and weariness became apparent on her rich colors and cheeks, Alec replaced the old one with new. I had left home when but a boy. A cousin of my father's, a wealthy East India merchant, took me on one of his trips to Calcutta, intending, he told them at home, if we suited each other, to adopt me as his successor and heir. But, I suppose, something was wanting in my nature to suit my rich relative. I could not toady or play spaniel. One reminder of my dependent situation was quite enough for me, and I hired on board ship as cabin boy, and said good-bye to Golden Ladie. I rather feared to meet my father, as he might blame me for my disobedience, and my wayward, ignorant youth was pretty well punished before my parents and self met. I seen life, hard and soft, and was man-grown when I next stood in Auld Scotia. I found one after another of my brothers and sisters had died, all except Alec, the youngest, whom I had left a baby in the cradle, now grown a young man, and the comfort of his parents' old age. That same year my father died, and mother and Alec lived on in the old homestead, almost under the shadow of the Ochil hills. Alec was employed in a large house as book-keeper, and every Saturday evening saw him at home with 'Bonnie wee mither,' until the following Monday morn. Some years since I had the good fortune to win a prize in the matrimonial lottery, for, without undue exaggeration, my wife is a jewel above price. We visited the land of my birth for a wedding trip and to have the blessing of 'wee mither.' After that I settled here, where my wife was born, and where she best loved to dwell. On that fatal evening that brought so much sorrow to watching, expecting friends and relations in Scotland, Alec was on his way, for he wrote to Mother to meet him at the station, and to wear the last new dress and tartan coat or plaid he had sent her; that he would ride with the engineer, who was a great friend of his, and for 'wee mither' to invite him to spend Christmas Day with them, as he was a stranger in Scotland and had no friends there but Alec. Well, mother was at the station to meet her boy and his friend, but there was no express train that night. When the fearful truth was understood, reason tottered and fell, and the physicians in attendance declared her case hopeless. Mrs. Caverhill and myself went over in the first steamer going out, for there was none else of her children living, and brought her home with us. Since then we have watched her carefully, and up to the present meeting with you, to all strangers, and in fact, everybody, she seems alike indifferent. Sometimes she will be a whole week without remembering who I am, or that Mrs. Caverhill is my wife. Perhaps she hears some tones in your voice that recalls Alec to her mind. I noticed her start when you called her 'mither.' Another strange feature in her case is, she shows no remembrance of her former religious tendencies. Our family has always been Roman Catholic on father and mother's side, and no children were more carefully trained or taught our religion by a mother than we have been. That early teaching has been my armor when youth and inexperience sorely needed help. And as for Alec, he was truly a Christian and Catholic gentleman. The one hope now of Mrs. Caverhill and myself is that God will restore her reason and remembrance of her early faith before He calls her home. Now, Miss Harland, just use your own judgment how you speak to her; everything you do will be for the best, and may God bless your efforts. I hope you will not deem me intrusive in bringing my poor, afflicted parent so forcibly before you; but, like my wife, I have a strong feeling that the interest you have aroused in her hitherto numbed faculties is the precursor of good tidings."

Arrived at the house, the first one to greet us was "Bonnie wee mither," and as her thin, small hand slid into mine, I kissed the beautiful child-like face, thanking her for her welcome.

"Aye, neebor, ye'r welcome; welcome as the sunlight is the dark Looch-na-gat. Allan brocht ye back. Come ben and rest ye, and she drew me, gently and kindly, as one would a person they desired to honor.

Her mood had changed since the morning. During the evening repast she scarcely spoke, and Mrs. Caverhill noticed she eat very little.

Mr. Caverhill was called away on some business connected with the sale of cattle, and as his wife led the way into an exquisitely furnished drawing-room, she said, laughingly; "I will have to do Allan's share of entertaining until his return. Now, will it be music, or would you prefer I should do as the children, when 'waiting each other,' show you my picture book?"

"Ah, music by all means," I replied, "as I see you have a superb piano."

Just before entering herself at the instrument she placed her mother-in-law in her accustomed arm-chair, shook up the soft cushions and drew a hassock for her feet to rest on, saying, "Now, mother dear, I am going to play for you."

One could see the old lady was accustomed to all these little attentions, and took them as a matter of course.

Beautiful indeed was the music my hostess entertained me with. Exquisite, dreamy melodies, that almost transported me with delight. For a final, she glided into "Auld Robin Gray," and gave it such pathos and expression that must have captivated the heart of its composer, if that lady still lived, and heard her rendering of it. While enjoying the music, I was curious to watch the effect on "wee mither." She seemed far away in mind during the first part, until "Auld Robin Gray" came stealing on the ear like a spirit of the past. She glanced over at the piano with a quiet, startled look, then at me, saying:

"What's yon, Mysie's sayin' about Auld Robin Gray? Aye, aye, Auld Robin Gray; it's lang syne I heard it first," and then replied into her former abstraction as she spoke, saying as she bent over her: "Mother, dear, I was not speaking, I was playing for you."

But "wee mither" took no notice of her; did not seem to hear her, and with a look of disappointment she took a seat beside me.

When thanking her for the great pleasure her playing gave me, I remarked "you years have been no ordinary training, and you must be a passionate lover of the art to arrive at such perfection. Very few amateurs play as you do."

"'Tis true I am passionately fond of music, and I am proud to hear my dear teachers spoken of as no ordinary instructors. The sisters of St. Mary's Convent, where I was educated, used to tell me 'Music was a talent God had given me to be used as a solace for those around me, and to-night, when mother noticed, for the first time, anything I played I realized the force of the saying.'"

"Dear friend," I said, "let us hope 'tis the beginning of the awakening from the mental torpor. I am as hopeful as yourself on that subject. Mr. Caverhill gave me some particulars when we were out this evening, and I find the strangest part of her malady is the total oblivion of God or religious sentiment."

"Yes, Miss Harland, that to me is the strangest and most painful part. Up to that fatal event her life was that of an exemplary Christian wife, mother and friend. From what Allan tells me of his early recollections of her teachings, examples and daily practices of our holy and beautiful faith, their household must have been an edifying one to their dissenting neighbors. Unless you are a Catholic—a Roman Catholic, I mean, Miss Harland—you cannot understand our feelings in this case. To have the dear, old mother slip away to the other world without some preparation to meet her God, without being able to say, pardon me, my saviour, my sins and offences, without being able to make some conscious Act of Contrition. They say there are none perfectly happy in this life, and I suppose 'tis true; for were it not for that one heart pain there is no happier couple than Allan and his guld wife."

For an answer, I drew my Rosary from the pocket of my travelling dress and kissed it. "Well, well," she exclaimed; to think how my first impression has misled me. I set you down in my mind as a strict Presbyterian—one of the real orthodox stamp. After that I'll never trust my first impressions. Won't Allan have a good laugh at me, for I mean to tell him how fancy misled me."

When Mrs. Caverhill joined us, he enjoyed her mistake quite as much as herself.

"I often told you, Mysie, never to trust or be carried away by first impressions."

Before taking his seat he saluted his mother with tender and reverent respect, but she took no notice of him whatever. In a low voice Mrs. Caverhill told him of her sudden recognition of "Robin Gray."

"Well, let us be thankful for even that; the full awakening will come in God's time. Have you been playing, Mysie? Give us my favorite, Haydn's 'God Save the Emperor.' After that we will beg something from Miss Harland. The last time I was in New York, about a month since, I heard it beautifully rendered in St. Patrick's Cathedral, with full orchestra accompaniment. The choir sang one of the Benediction hymns to it, Tantum Ergo, I think, were the words. It was a glorious final, of the sweetest and most solemn part of Sunday's devotion. I hope you will be charmed with it, Miss Harland, as well as myself."

As its beautiful modulations rose and fell under the artistic touch of the performer, I felt my whole being under the spell that perfect music always holds over its admirers. When its last note died on the ear, Mr. Caverhill requested his wife to play an accompaniment and sing the simple air to the words of the Benediction Hymn. Her sweet and carefully trained voice took it up and without being aware of an effort, I found myself joining in with an alto part; Mr. Caverhill added his deep bass, and quite a respectable trio was the result.

"Why, Miss Harland, that music and you must be old friends. 'Tis not the first time you have sang it as a concerted arrangement," said my polite host.

"That melody is an established favorite, in every Catholic Church in Canada," I informed him; "so you need not wonder I welcomed it as an old friend. I could not help singing it with you."

And the "wee mither," the reader will ask; did the grand old anthem awaken no recollection of the past? No, not the slightest sign did she give that she even heard us. She reclined amidst the cushions, her eyes wandering here and there, the thin small hands nervously entwined. She seemed like one awaiting something the heart dreaded.

Mrs. Caverhill had observed me, watching the "wee mither," and in a low tone she requested some old Scotch song. "Sing it for her, and to her."

Back to my mind came a ballad I had seen in an old newspaper, composed by the Rev. Dr. Bethune, of Brooklyn, N. Y. It seemed as if that one song alone would come to my lips: So striking a few quaint old chords that fitted to the measure, I sang it, as Mrs. Caverhill requested, "To the dear old mother."

Oh sing the me the auld Scotch sangs I the braid braid Scotch lang, The sangs my father loved to hear the sangs my mither sang, When she sat beside my cradle or crooned me on her knee, An' I wad-na sleep the sang sae sweet the auld Scotch sangs for me.

Yes, sing the auld, the gude auld sangs, Auld Scotch's gentle pride, O' the wimplin burn an' sunnie brae an' the cooie ingle side, Sangs o' the broom an' heather, sangs o' the crysing trees, The Lavrook's lit the gowan's blink, Auld Scotia's sangs for me.

Sing on sing mair o' these auld sangs for lika ane can tell, O' joy or sorrow o' the past where memory loves to dwell, Let us win grey and thins win auld until the day is dee, I'll bless the Scottish tongue that sings my mither's sangs for me.

(To be continued.)

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