

"But I am afraid," said Margaret, "that this would interfere with our arrangements for the evening."

"Oh, not in the least, it is only five miles, and we can easily get back in time, if that is the only objection."

"But if I may be so bold," said Helen, "who do you propose to honour with an invitation to this delightful ride, over heather and moor, to look at a parcel of misshapen stones?"

Tom took upon himself the duty of replying; what he did reply it matters not; it is sufficient that arrangements were made, and that the party were to call for Helen and Margaret, and proceed on the proposed route. It may be proper here to introduce more particularly to the reader, the two sisters, and to explain the circumstances, under which the foregoing conversation was held, as will enable him the better to understand the sequel of our story. Robert Morrison, the father of Helen and Margaret, was one of that class of farmers so common in Scotland, who are the pride and boast of their country. He possessed from his ancestors the farm of Millseat in Aberdeenshire, which had come into the hands of his great-grandfather, by one of those long leases which have now gone out of vogue along with many more old customs, which the march of modern improvement has succeeded in banishing. The comparatively trifling rent which Robert had to pay for Millseat, had enabled him to bring up a large family in a style of much greater comfort than is usual with most persons of his rank, in a country where the false refinements which the middling classes so often try to catch from their superiors in fortune, have not yet been able to penetrate to any great extent. Robert Morrison, or, Millseat, as he was oftener called, from the name of his farm, was well known, by all the parish, as a man of scrupulous integrity, and strict adherence to his word, and to his own opinion, which last, to say the truth, sometimes degenerated into something very like obstinacy, for it was next to impossible to make him abandon a determination he had once formed. The rest of the family, with the exception of the eldest son, William, and a younger brother, George, need not for the purposes of our tale be introduced to the reader; indeed their attention will be principally confined to the two sisters. Of these, Margaret, the eldest, had just completed her twenty-second year, while Helen was just out of her teens. To look upon the two, one would never have supposed them to be sisters, so different were they in appearance and in disposition. Margaret was of a quiet and reserved disposition, moving about at her daily duties as if her whole soul were bound up in them, making herself felt rather than seen, and always anxious to promote the happiness of every one around her. She would smile so sweetly and speak so kindly, that she had endeared herself to all who knew her, and the

cottars' wives, as they saw her walking out in a summer afternoon, with a younger sister in one hand, and a book in the other, would say to themselves, "Aye, there's the maiden of the Millseat, daunerin' o'er the hill-sides, wi' her buik in her hand; but she'll mak' a good wife to somebody for a' that, she's sae kind to the puir, and has a pleasant word for a' body she meets." In person, Margaret was rather above than below the middle size, with a face that one would have thought too destitute of animation, till she spoke or smiled; and then as you looked into her large dark eyes, you could see her gentle, sympathising, contemplative spirit, and feel that there was soul within.

Helen was in many respects different, but even more beautiful. Full of life and animation, with a gaiety of disposition which nothing clouded even for a moment, she was always extracting amusement from every thing that came in her way. Her youth and her extreme beauty, had served as an excuse to her friends for many of her frolics, for they found it difficult to look upon her clear laughing countenance, and at the same time seek to cast a shade over it, even for a moment; and if they did chide, it was with so little earnestness that it made but little impression. Although possessed of this liveliness of disposition, it is no less true than remarkable, that along with it, Helen possessed a rare self-command, which it would be vain to seek for in many of a more contemplative and sober turn of mind.

A day fixed on for a ride is almost sure to be dull and rainy, or otherwise, so "uncomfortable," that one might be tempted to believe that a malicious spirit had the weather on such occasions committed to his peculiar care, and that he was determined to break up and demolish the plans of all those who presumed to calculate on any out door enjoyment. The morning on which our party set out was an exception—being one of the finest in a Scottish autumn. There was little, however, of that gorgeous splendor to be seen, which renders the decline of the year in America a perpetual pageant, when nature puts on her robes of brightest hues, as if desirous to exhibit herself, for a brief season in all her glory, conscious of the dreary change which must soon succeed. The earth was clad in a robe of brownish hue, and there were wavering streaks of white clouds here and there sailing about in the blue sky;—in short it was such a day as must have pleased even the most delicate and fastidious—clear, sunshiny, and beautiful.

At an early hour in the forenoon the party assembled at Millseat, where the two sisters and their brother George were in readiness to receive them. The party consisted, besides these, of Tom Somers and his sister, the two Misses Smith, and Mr. Smith, a young man who had seen the world, and was rather a distinguished character, in his own estimation, and George Allison with his friend, Henry Lawson. The two last I shall briefly introduce to my readers.