

MY GOOD OLD SUIT.

BY A. MACFIE.

My good old suit of Scottish plaid
Against my will aside is laid;
It makes me sad to see thee cast
Away with relics of the past.

Can I forget, tho' long ago,
How snug I felt from top to toe,
And how my heart was full of glee
When I was first encased in thee.

How every time I chanced to pass
A small or ample looking-glass,
I stole a peep at thee and thought
A better suit was never bought.

So firm in texture, smooth in pile,
In dye so rich, so rare in style;
A better garb ne'er clothed a king,
Thy praises I shall ever sing.

To ponder on thy fate I'm loath.
Yet fancy I can hear a moan
Gnaw thee with rage and then digest
My nether garment, coat and vest.

Or may be torn and cut in tags
By busy dame for carpet-rags;
Or in the lunatic ragman's cart,
En route for his unwholesome mart.

Again thy fate I thus construe,
They've sold my vesture to a Jew,
And he with greedy eye for gain,
Has sold my plaided suit again.

A draught of gall I seem to drink,
As on thy fate I fondly think;
Ah! thus I ponder on thy fate,
Till my heart is nigh to break.

But like to thine my end shall be,
(Thy end and mine the fates decreed)
When thoughtless youth and age divide,
Had cast me with contempt aside.

JANET'S FORGIVENESS.

CHAPTER I.

THE HAND OF FATE.

The scorching July sun poured down its rays upon a remote but extremely picturesque watering place on the north coast—upon the wooded heights, the snow-white cliffs, interspersed with patches of velvet green and clumps of purple heather, upon the dancing waters which reflected the pure blue of the cloudless sky, and upon the yellow glistening sands.

By the seashore the sails hung idly down, and the rowers lay listlessly along their boats, unable to use their oars, so intense was the heat of the sun.

In one of these boats lay a man so perfect in his grand proportions that one might almost have thought him a statue. His eyes were closed, not in sleep, but from exhaustion, and his jet black hair curled closely round a forehead whose white breadth contrasted well with his deeply bronzed cheek, whilst upon his finely chiseled features rested a shade of ineffable melancholy which was rarely absent from his handsome countenance.

The boat was near the shore; so near, indeed, that the merry laughter of a party of bathers was distinctly heard. Holding each other's hands, a group of pretty sea-nymphs had formed a ring, and were dancing merrily in the water.

"Come, Clarence, rouse up and see the mermaids!" exclaimed the companion of the still, recumbent figure referred to. "Get up, old fellow, and do homage to the sea-goddesses."

Clarence sighed slightly, and, smiling faintly, said, "Be quiet, Ned: I would not get up to behold Undine herself rising from the sea. You may lower me down as much as you like, but for goodness sake do not ask me to get up on such a broiling day as this!"

His companion turned half indignantly away to watch the bathers again, and resume his observation of one fair girl in particular, whom he had noticed from the commencement of the sport, for the exquisite ease and grace of her movements in the water, and her accomplished style of swimming. He was not near enough to see her features, but he saw that, unlike all the others, she allowed her long silken hair to float over her snowy shoulders at will. He could see wet tresses glisten like burnished gold in the sun from where he stood, and thought if the face was as beautiful as the hair, he should like to have one look at it before he ceased his watch of the merry group in the water.

Suddenly loud cries came over the few waves that now separated the bathers from the boat, for the latter had drifted near the shore, and the perfect calmness of the water had tempted the fair swimmer to strike out farther than usual, and she struggled in vain against the receding tide.

"Help! help!" cried out a chorus of voices. "She is drowning! she is drowning!"

The appalling cry aroused Clarence Harleigh as though by magic. He tore off his coat, and in an instant leaped into the waves.

Ned was already over, and half-way to the sinking girl, when Clarence, cool and collected, swam by him; and while Ned was making almost superhuman efforts to reach her, Clarence's sweeping strokes had already brought him to her. He clasped her in his strong arm, her long tresses hanging over his shoulder, and her pale, lovely countenance turned upwards. He then shaped his course towards the boat, which was much nearer than the bathing machine, for Clarence was already borne down with the lifeless weight of his beautiful burden.

He knew that the boat contained several articles of a restorative nature, as well as a large

woollen shawl of his own; and what was more, a fisherman, who would probably know better how to bring a drowned person to life, than the wet, frightened men and women who stood gasping in their lump and dripping clothes on the beach.

All the colour died out of Clarence's cheek as he gazed at the pale, lifeless body he had carried in his arms. Had he been too late?—had his efforts been unavailing?—was the thought that flashed through his excited brain. Wrapping her up tenderly, he gently forced some brandy through her hueless lips.

For some moments he remained in breathless, agonizing suspense. At length, however, the heavily-fringed eyelids unclosed, and she drew a faint breath. Then the crimson stream of life flickered faintly in her pale cheek. For a moment she looked wonderingly around. Then her large, shy, gazelle-like eyes, telling in their wordless eloquence of the pure, womanly soul from whence they drew their enchantment, rested upon Clarence, and she blushed.

"Oh, how can I thank you, sir!" she said, in a low, sweet voice, holding out her small, white hand.

Clarence pressed it to his lips, and was about to reply, when an elderly lady in deep mourning stepped forward, and passionately embracing the young girl, exclaimed, "My child—my dear, dear child!"

When these transports had somewhat subsided, she turned to Clarence, and taking his hand, she said, with deep emotion, "You know not how great—how precious a service you have rendered me! Janet is now my only child; the only being left me on earth to love and cherish; and I thank you for your noble conduct—thank you from the very depths of my heart!"

"My dear madam, you over-rate my deserts," returned Clarence, with a faint smile. "Believe me, the knowledge that I have been the means of conducting to your happiness amply repays me for all."

A carriage was now in waiting to convey the ladies to their hotel. When they were seated, the elderly lady drew a card from her case, and, handing it to Clarence, said, "This is my address. We leave for home early to-morrow, and it will afford both myself and daughter the greatest pleasure to see you at any time."

The grateful, enchanting look which the young girl bestowed upon Clarence as the carriage drove off, fully confirmed her mother's assertion.

A few weeks later, Clarence Harleigh, who had been incessantly haunted by the image of Janet Gordon, found himself roaming over the glens and mountains of a wild district of the northern Highlands.

Taking the card from his pocket he read, "Mrs. Gordon, Glen-Creran."

"Strange coincidence! Was it chance or fate that directed my footsteps hither?" he concluded, gazing upon a beautiful vale expanded below, with cultivated fields, woods, and groves, and among many huts sprinkled about the landscape, one mansion, to which they all seemed to appertain, and which, without any grandeur, yet suited, in its unpretending and venerable solemnity, the character of that lonely and lovely place.

"Madman that I am to dream of love," he soliloquized, "with such a dark, withering cloud overshadowing my life; and yet I cannot tear her image from my heart, try how I may. 'Tis the only ray of sunlight, the only gleam of comfort I have known since that rash, that fatal deed, which will cling to me like a curse till the bitter end!"

He descended into the vale, and found himself on a smooth lawn and close by the mansion which he had discerned from the hill above, but which had till now been concealed by a grove of dark pines.

At this moment, to his astonishment he beheld advancing towards him Mrs. Gordon and her daughter, and the young girl's face was radiant with pleasurable surprise, and holding out her hands, said, "My preserver, thrice welcome to Glen-Creran!"

Clarence bowed, and expressing his pleasure at this wholly unexpected meeting—for he had had no idea that the place he sought was so near—readily accompanied his charming conductress into the house.

"You are just in time," observed the amiable hostess; "we are about to have a storm."

Even as she spoke, the low muttering of distant thunder was heard among the hills, and the river, swollen suddenly by the deluging rain, roared along the swinging woods till the whole valley was in a tumult. It was a true Highland night, and the old house rocked like a ship at sea.

But the walls of the mansion were thick and massive, and the evening passed happily within. The ladies had not passed all their lives in a Highland glen, and they conversed with their guest most eloquently about the various foreign cities which they had all visited.

The harp was touched, and the wild Gaelic airs sounded still more wildly between the fitful pauses of the storm. She who played and sang so sweetly was no sorceress inhabiting an enchanted castle, but a young, graceful girl of eighteen, innocent as beautiful, and, therefore, a more powerful enchantress than any that ever wound the invisible lines of her spell around a knight of romance.

At the conclusion of one air, "A Chieftain's Lament," the mother heaved a deep sigh; and in the silence that ensued, the artless beauty said to Clarence, who was standing beside her,

entranced by the witching melody, "My poor dead brother used to love that air; I ought not to have sung it."

And stealing softly to her mother's side, the gentle girl twined her loving arms around her neck, and kissed away the falling tears.

Recovering her wonted cheerfulness, Mrs. Gordon again referred to the circumstance that had brought them together, saying how great was the pleasure she experienced at Clarence's unexpected but welcome visit, and wishing him good-night, retired to her chamber.

"And I need not add, Mr. Harleigh, that my pleasure at beholding my preserver is as great, if not greater, than mamma's," said Janet, with charming candour; "and I sincerely hope that my poor efforts to induce you to make a long stay at Glen-Creran will not prove wholly unsuccessful."

"I could stay here for ever if blessed with your dear society," whispered Clarence, fervently, into the lovely, blushing girl's ear, as he detained her trembling little hand in his. Overcoming an almost irresistible impulse to clasp her to his heart, he bade her good-night, and the happy girl joined her mother in the room above. In less than an hour the household was wrapped in slumber.

Clarence alone was wakeful. Not for several years had he been so happy. The fairy-like vision of the beautiful girl beside her harp, singing, while the wild night was roaring in the glen, would not leave his thoughts. Even when towards morning, he fell asleep, she pictured in his dreams, and then it seemed as if they had long been friends—as if they were betrothed, and had fixed their bridal day.

From these enchanting, blissful visions he awoke, and heard the sound of the mountain torrent roaring itself to rest. He then recollected where he was, his real condition returned upon him, and that lovely maiden was then to him only a delusive phantom once seen, and to smile upon him no more.

He rose at sunrise, and contemplated the romantic scene without, the hush that slowly settled on the woods, the white mists rolling on the mountain side, till at last the glorious sun burst forth in all its splendour, and Glen-Creran lay below in smiling and joyful beauty, a wild paradise, where the world might be pleasantly forgotten, and human life pass away like a dream.

After breakfast Janet appeared in a bewitching morning toilette, which displayed to advantage the supple grace of her exquisite form, set forth, accompanied by Clarence, upon a preconcerted ramble.

The rich and cheerful beauty of the early autumn covered all the glen. They stood upon the mountain tops, and waited till the wreath of mist rose up in the early sunlight, and revealed far below the motionless silence of the wood depths. They sat beside the mountain cat-racts, and traversed the heathery shores of the great island lochs and enjoyed the stern silence of the black pine forest. The belling of the red deer came to them in the desert, and they strained their eyes to catch a glimpse of the eagle, whose wild shriek was heard in the blue hollow of the sky; and thus the happy golden days were passed, each fleeting hour more firmly forging love's rosy fetters around them.

CHAPTER II.

FOR BETTER OR WORSE.

On the fourth day of Clarence Harleigh's sojourn at Glen-Creran, a visitor arrived: a visitor whom Janet instinctively felt was destined in some way to destroy the blissful harmony, which, since the advent of Clarence, had entered her young life.

Ethel Allison, Janet's cousin, was a brilliant brunette, with exquisitely beautiful features, though a proud, haughty expression pervaded them. Her eyes were large, black, and lustrous, possessing that intensity of gaze which is calculated to fascinate the beholder; and her tall, stately form was a study of grace and symmetry combined.

On being introduced to Clarence, she looked puzzled for a moment. Then recollecting herself smiled, and said, "We have met before, Mr. Harleigh, I fancy; where, my treacherous memory will not for the moment assist me to remember."

Clarence replied that he had travelled much, and that doubtless it was on the Continent that they had met, but that he must also plead guilty of having no recollection of the circumstance.

Miss Allison had a fund of small talk at her command, and conversed fluently on the topics of the day. She possessed a full, rich voice, and her touch was both refined and artistic. Seating herself at the piano, she surprised and enthralled her hearers by her masterly powers of execution.

She had the strange faculty of keeping Clarence ever by her side, under some pretext or other—of entirely monopolizing his society; and her flashing orbs would blaze with triumph as she turned them on the gentle girl who sat seemingly neglected and alone, tacitly acknowledging her superior charms and accomplishments, as she watched Ethel's undisguised admiration of the man who had saved her life, and who was becoming hourly far dearer to her than life itself; and a nameless, dreary, desolate feeling hung heavily at her heart.

When Ethel retired to rest that night, long did she survey the exquisite loveliness of her peerless form in the large mirror.

Smiling proudly at the reflection, she said, "I think I have made a favourable impression; one that my sickly cousin will find it difficult to efface, with all her arts and wiles, the soft-spoken little hypocrite! She will, surely, with her insipid school-girlishness, never attempt to compete with me in winning his love!"

At every yachting excursion upon the lakes, picnic in the wood, or croquet party on the lawn, Ethel contrived to retain Clarence exclusively as her cavalier; how, he himself could not have told, so potent, yet imperceptible, was the power of the siren's fascinations.

One glorious afternoon, however, Clarence, for the first time since Ethel's appearance at Glen-Creran, found himself free to follow the bent of his inclination; which said bent led him in the direction of a lovely sylvan retreat, where the fragrant foxglove and the feathery fern grow in wild luxuriance; and, where, upon a low, mossy bank, reclined the all-engrossing object of his thoughts, sweet Janet Gordon.

Her dress was of some soft shimmering material of pure white, with frills of creamy lace at her throat and wrists, and her sunny hair was arranged in elegant coils around her shapely head. There was no ornament about her, no colour; all was ethereal, graceful, and tender. One little hand supported a miniature parasol to protect her from the fierce rays of the setting sun, which glinted through the clustering foliage. She had a wistful, pensive look, and appeared wrapped in a deep reverie.

A bright flush of pleasure mounted to her fair brow, however, when, on looking up, she beheld Clarence advancing towards her. How handsome he looked in his faultless tourist suit, she thought.

Approaching the spot where she sat, he threw himself down on the velvet turf beside her.

"I trust I have not dispelled some pleasant dream, Miss Gordon," he said, in his low, musical voice—"interrupted some blissful reverie; and, more than all, I hope my presence will not be considered an intrusion."

"How can you ask it?" responded Janet, reprovingly. "Have I not said that the preserver of my life could never be otherwise than welcome? Besides," she added, playfully, "I have had so little of your society of late."

Clarence thought there was just a shade of reproach in her tones. A sigh involuntarily escaped him; his handsome visage became clouded in a moment.

"Pardon me, Mr. Harleigh," said Janet, with an expression of tenderest sympathy. "But why are you so sad when in my society? You are not so with Miss Allison."

"Can you not guess?" he returned, wistfully; do not my eyes betray me?—does not my heart speak to yours of its passionate adoration? Oh, how can I be serious with your frivolous cousin? She is nothing to me, never will—never can be! It is you, dear Janet—you that I love! and with all the intensity of a first affection; passionately—devotedly! Think, then, how great must be my anguish when I tell you that a dark, unholy secret overclouds my life—one which I dare not importune to the dear one whose love is more precious to me than my life! How, then, can I dare to ask her to become my wife?" he cried, despairingly.

The rosy stream of life cast its hues upon her cheeks for a moment. Then, in a voice tremulous with emotion, she said, "From my heart I pity you—deeply, sincerely; for whatever the nature of your secret, I feel convinced that it reflects no dishonour on you," she concluded, earnestly, placing her fairy fingers soothingly upon his shoulder.

"Hush you for those dear, those precious, hope-inspiring words!" Clarence exclaimed, rapturously, looking up into her beautiful, soul-dimmed countenance. May I—dare I hope one day to win your priceless love?"

The gentle girl was deeply agitated, unable to speak the words she so longed, yet feared to utter.

"Speak to me, dearest," he pleaded—"speak to me! The happiness of my whole life depends on your answer. Oh, Janet—dear, dear Janet! do not doom me to despair!"

"I love you with all my heart, dear Clarence!" were the blissful words which issued with pathetic earnestness from her lips. "I shall love you all my life!"

"My own, my darling, my peerless love!" cried Clarence, in an ecstasy of joy, clasping her in his arms.

Before they reached home that evening, there was a clear moon to light them through the fragrant birch-woods.

Her heart was given up entirely, with all its calm, pure, and holy thoughts and feelings, to him who was now her lover. It knew no disguise, nor had it one single emotion to veil or conceal. His smile was light, and his voice was music to her; and to the serene depths of an affection which had been growing within her heart from the very first moment she beheld him, would she now have willingly gone with him to the uttermost parts of the earth, or laid down her young and happy life for his sake.

It was Sabbath day, and Glen-Creran was now not only hushed in the breathing repose of nature, but all rural labour was at rest. No shepherd shouted on the mountain, no reapers were in the half-shorn fields, and the fisherman's net was hung up to dry in the sunshine.

When the party met again in the breakfast-room, whose windows, opening on the lawn, let in the pure fragrance of the roses and honeysuckles, and made the room a portion, as it were, of the rich wooded scenery, there was blended