

CHOICE LITERATURE.

PET MARJORIE.

BY JOHN BROWN, M.D.

(Continued.)

Here is one of her last letters, dated Kirkcaldy, 12th October, 1811. You can see how her nature is deepening and enriching: "MY DEAR MOTHER,—You will think that I entirely forget you but I assure you that you are greatly mistaken. I think of you always and often sigh to think of the distance between us two loving creatures of nature. We have regular hours for all our occupations, first at 7 o'clock we go to the dancing and come home at eight we then read our Bible and get our repeating and then play till ten then we get our music till 11 when we get our writing and accounts we sew from 12 till 1 after which I get my gramer and then work till five. At 7 we come and knit till 8 when we don't go to the dancing. This is an exact description. I must take a hasty farewell to her whom I love, reverence and doat on and who I hope thinks the same of

"MARJORY FLEMING.

"P. S.—An old pack of cards (!) would be very acceptable."

This other is a month earlier: "MY DEAR LITTLE MAMA,—I was truly happy to hear that you were all well. We are surrounded with measles at present on every side, for the Herons got it, and Isabella Heron was near Death's Door, and one night her father lifted her out of bed, and she fell down as they thought lifeless. Mr. Heron said, 'That lassie's deed noo'—I'm no deed yet.' She then threw up a big worm nine inches and a half long. I have begun dancing, but am not very fond of it, for the boys strikes and mocks me.—I have been another night at the dancing; I like it better. I will write to you as often as I can; but I am afraid not every week. I long for you with the longings of a child to embrace you—to fold you in my arms. I respect you with all the respect due to a mother. You don't know how I love you. So I shall remain, your loving child. —M. FLEMING."

What rich involution of love in the words marked ! Here are some lines to her beloved Isabella, in July, 1811:—

"There is a thing that I do want,
With you these beautiful walks to haunt
We would be happy if you would
Try to come over if you could.
Then I would all quite happy be
Now and for all eternity.
My mother is so very sweet,
And checks my appetite to eat:
My father shows us what to do;
But O I'm sure that I want you.
I have no more of poetry;
O Isa do remember me,
And try to love you Marjory."

In a letter from "Isa to

"Miss Muff Ma lie Marjory Fleming.
favoured by Rare Rear-Admiral Fleming

she says: "I long much to see you, and talk over all our old stories together, and to hear you read and repeat. I am pining for my old friend Cesario, and poor Lear, and wicked Richard. How is the dear Multiplication table going on? are you still as much attached to 9 times 9 as you used to be?"

But this dainty, bright thing is about to flee,—to come "quick to confusion." The measles she writes of seized her, and she died on the 19th of December, 1811. The day before her death, Sunday, she sat up in bed, worn and thin, her eye gleaming as with the light of a coming world, and with a tremulous, old voice repeated the following lines by Burns,—heavy with the shadow of death, and lit with the fantasy of the judgment-seat,—the publican's prayer in paraphrase:—

"Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene?
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms?
Some drops of joy, with draughts of ill between,
Some gleams of sunshine 'mid renewing storms.
Is it departing pangs my soul alarms?
Or death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?
For guilt, for guilt my terrors are in arms.
I tremble to approach an angry God,
And justly smart beneath His sin-avenging rod."

"Fain would I say, forgive my foul offence,
Fain promise never more to disobey;
But should my Author health again dispense,
Again I might forsake fair virtue's way,
Again in folly's path might go astray,
Again exalt the brute and sink the man.
Then how should I for heavenly mercy pray,
Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan,
Who sin so oft have mourned, yet to temptation run?"

"O thou great Governor of all below,
If I might dare a lifted eye to Thee
Thy nod can make the tempest cease to blow,
And still the tumult of the raging sea;
With that controlling power assist even me
Those headstrong furious passions to confine,
For all unfit I feel my powers to be
To rule their torrent in the allowed line;
O aid me with Thy help, OMNIPOTENCE DIVINE."

It is more affecting than we care to say to read her mother's and Isabella Keith's letters written immediately after her death. Old and withered, tattered and pale, they are now; but when you read them, how quick, how throbbing with life and love! how rich in that language of affection which only women, and Shakespeare, and Luther can use,—that power of detaining the soul over the beloved object and its loss.

"K Philto Constance.

You are as fond of grief as of your child
Const. Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me;
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form.
Then I have reason to be fond of grief."

What variations cannot love play on this one string!

In her first letter to Miss Keith, Mrs. Fleming says of her dead Maide: "Never did I behold so beautiful an object. It resembled the finest wax-work. There was in the countenance an expression of sweetness and serenity which seemed to indicate that the pure spirit had anticipated the joys of heaven ere it quitted the mortal frame. To tell you what your Maide said of you would fill volumes; for you was the constant theme of her discourse, the subject of her thoughts, and ruler of her actions. The last time she mentioned you was a few hours before all sense save that of suffering was suspended, when she said to Dr. Johnstone, 'If you will let me out at the New Year, I will be quite contented.' I asked what made her so anxious to get out then 'I want to purchase a New Year's gift for Isa Keith with the sixpence you gave me for being patient in the measles; and I would like to choose it myself.' I do not remember her speaking afterwards, except to complain of her head, till just before she expired, when she articulated, 'O mother! mother!'"

Do we make too much of this little child, who has been in her grave in Abbotshall Kirkyard these fifty and more years? We may of her cleverness,—not of her affectionateness, her nature. What a picture the *animus infans* gives us of herself, her vivacity, her passionateness, her precocious love making, her passion for nature, for swine, for all living things, her reading, her turn for expression, her satire, her frankness, her little sins and rages, her great repentances! We don't wonder Walter Scott carried her off in the neck of his plaid, and played himself with her for hours.

The year before she died, when in Edinburgh, she was at a Twelfth Night supper at Scott's, in Castle Street. The company had all come,—all but Marjorie. Scott's familiars, whom we all know, were there,—all were come but Marjorie; and all were dull because Scott was dull. "Where's that bairn? what can have come over her? I'll go myself and see." And he was getting up, and would have gone, when the bell rang and in came Duncan Roy and his henchman Tougald, with the sedan-chair, which was brought right into the lobby, and its top raised. And there, in its darkness and dingy old cloth, sat Maide in white, her eyes gleaming, and Scott bending over her in ecstasy,—"hung over her enamoured." "Sit ye there, my dauntie, till they all see you"; and forth with he brought them all. You can fancy the scene. And he lifted her up and marched to his seat with her on his stout shoulder, and set her down beside him; and then began the night, and such a night! Those who knew Scott best said that night was never equalled; Maide and he were the stars; and she gave them Constance's speeches and *Helvellyn*, the ballet then much in vogue, and all her repertoire,—Scott showing her off, and being oftentimes rebuked by her for his intentional blunders.

We are indebted for the following—and our readers will be not unwilling to share our obligations—to her sister: "Her birth was 15th January, 1803; her death, 19th December, 1811. I take this from her Bibles." I believe she was a child of robust health, of much vigour of body, and beautifully formed arms, and until her last illness, never was an hour in bed. She was niece to Mrs. Keith, residing in No. 1 North Charlotte Street, who was not Mrs. Murray Keith, although very intimately acquainted with that old lady. My aunt was a daughter of Mr. James Rae, surgeon, and married the younger son of old Keith of Ravelstone. Corstorphine Hill belonged to my aunt's husband; and his eldest son, Sir Alexander Keith, succeeded his uncle to both Ravelstone and Dunnottar. The Keiths were not connected by relationship with the Howisons of Braehead; but my grandfather and grandmother (who was), a daughter of Cant of Thurston and Giles-Grange, were on the most intimate footing with our Mrs. Keith's grandfather and grandmother; and so it has been for three generations, and the friendship consummated by my cousin William Keith marrying Isabella Craufurd.

"As to my aunt and Scott, they were on a very intimate footing. He asked my aunt to be godmother to his eldest daughter, Sophia Charlotte. I had a copy of Miss Edgeworth's 'Rosamond, and Harry and Lucy' for long, which was a gift to Marjorie from Walter Scott, probably the first edition of that attractive series, for it wanted 'Frank,' which is always now published as part of the series, under the title of *Early Lessons*. I regret to say these little volumes have disappeared."

"Sir Walter was no relation of Marjorie's but of the Keiths, through the Swintons; and, like Marjorie, he stayed much at Ravelstone in his early days, with his grand-aunt Mrs. Keith; and it was while seeing him there as a boy, that another aunt of mine composed, when he was about fourteen the lines prognosticating his future fame that Lockhart ascribes in his Life to Mrs. Cockburn, authoress of 'The Flowers of the Forest':—

'Go on, dear youth, the glorious path pursue
Which bounteous Nature kindly smooths for you;
Go bid the seeds her hands have sown arise,
By timely culture, to their native skies;
Go, and employ the poet's heavenly art,
Not merely to delight, but mend the heart.'

Mrs. Keir was my aunt's name, another of Dr. Rae's daughters." We cannot better end than in words from this same pen: "I have to ask you to forgive my anxiety in gathering up the fragments of Marjorie's last days, but I have an almost sacred feeling to all that pertains to her. You are quite correct in stating that measles were the cause

"Her Bible is before me, a fair, as then called; the faded marks are just as she placed them. There is one at David's lament over Jonathan."

of her death. My mother was struck by the patient quietness manifested by Marjorie during this illness, unlike her ardent, impulsive nature; but love and poetic feeling were unquenched. When Dr. Johnstone rewarded her submission with a sixpence, the request speedily followed that she might get out ere New Year's day came. When asked why she was so desirous of getting out, she immediately rejoined, 'O, I am so anxious to buy something with my sixpence for my dear Isa Keith.' Again, when lying very still, her mother asked her if there was anything she wished: 'O, yes! if you would just leave the room door open a wee bit, and play "The Land o' the Leal," and I will lie and think and enjoy myself' (this is just as stated to me by her mother and mine). Well, the happy day came, alike to parents and child, when Marjorie was allowed to come forth from the nursery to the parlour. It was Sabbath evening, and after tea. My father, who idolized this child, and never afterwards in my hearing mentioned her name, took her in his arms; and while walking her up and down the room, she said, 'Father, I will repeat something to you: what would you like?' He said, 'Just choose yourself, Maide.' She hesitated for a moment between the paraphrase, 'Few are thy days, and full of woe,' and the lines of Burns already quoted, but decided on the latter, a remarkable choice for a child. The repeating these lines seemed to stir up the depths of feeling in her soul. She asked to be allowed to write a poem; there was a doubt whether it would be right to allow her, in case of hurting her eyes. She pleaded earnestly, 'Just this once'; the point was yielded, her slate was given her, and with great rapidity she wrote an address of fourteen lines, 'to her loved cousin on the author's recovery,' her last work on earth:—

"Oh! Isa, pain did visit me,
I was at the last extremity;
How often did I think of you,
I wished your graceful form to view,
To clasp you in my weak embrace,
Indeed I thought I'd run my race:
Good care, I'm sure, was of me taken,
But still indeed I was much shaken,
At last I daily strength did gain,
And oh! at last, away went pain:
At length the doctor thought I might
Stay in the parlour all the night;
I now continue so to do,
Farewell to Nancy and to you."

She went to bed apparently well, awoke in the middle of the night with the old cry of woe to a mother's heart, 'My head, my head!' Three days of the dire malady, 'water in the head,' followed, and the end came."

"Soft, silken primrose, fading timelessly."

It is needless, it is impossible, to add anything to this: the fervour, the sweetness, the flash of poetic ecstasy, the lovely and glowing eye, the perfect nature of that bright and warm intelligence, that darling child,—Lady Nairne's words and the old tune, stealing up from the depths of the human heart, deep calling unto deep, gentle and strong like the waves of the great sea hushing themselves to sleep in the dark;—the words of Burns touching the kindred chord, her last numbers "wildly sweet" traced, with thin and eager fingers, already touched by the last enemy and friend,—*morsus canit*,—and that love which is so soon to be her everlasting light, is her song's burden to the end.

"She sets as sets the morning star, which goes
Not down behind the darkened west, nor hides
Obscured among the tempests of the sky,
But melts away into the light of heaven."

THE END.

A JAPANESE FABLE.

Once upon a time, there was in Japan a stonecutter, a simple workman in the quarries. His life was rude, he worked much, gained little, and was not at all satisfied with his fate. "Oh, if I could only be rich enough to rest, to sleep on thick matting, wrapped in a kimono of soft silk!" Such was the sigh he breathed to Heaven. An angel heard it. "It shall be according to thy desire," said the angel to him. And he at once became rich, and he rested, slept upon thick matting, add wrapped himself in a kimono of soft silk. It happened that the Emperor passed by. He was preceded by heralds on horseback, followed by a brilliant escort of cavaliers, and surrounded by persons who held over his head an immense parasol resplendent with gold. "What good does it do me to be rich," murmured the man, "as long as I have not the right to go out with an escort, and my head protected by a parasol? Why am I not an Emperor?" "Thou shalt be," said the angel. And indeed he became the Emperor. He had an escort before and behind him, and people who held above him an immense parasol resplendent with gold. However, the sun with its ardent beams dried up the country; and the dusty roads, quivering with its brightness, fatigued the eyes. "What's the advantage to be an Emperor," cried the man: "when the heat of the day exhausts you, and the sun never ceases to make you feel his power! But if one could be the sun!" "Behold! are you satisfied?" the angel asked. For he had become the sun, and he darted his beams up and down, right and left and all around him, and he scorched the herbage of the earth, and the faces of the princes of the earth. But now a cloud thrust itself between the earth and him. It held back the rays of the sun, and prevented them from falling upon the earth's surface. "There is strength," cried the man, "a cloud capable of resisting my power; it would be better if I were a cloud." "Very well," replied the angel. And the transformation was at once accomplished. The new cloud placed itself lightly between the sun and the earth, and so thoroughly intercepted the rays of the sun that it soon saw the earth covered with its shadow. Then it caused the big drops of rain, and pouring showers, and waterspouts to fall on the land, so that the torrents burst their borders, and the rivers spread over and devastated the fields. Nothing resisted the force of the