

STORIES  
POETRY

## The Inglenook

SKETCHES  
TRAVEL

## BEAUTIFUL UPON THE MOUNTAINS.

By David Lyall.

Janet Fairweather opened the door of the little cupboard in the attic room which was the sleeping place and sanctuary of her son David when he was at home, and took therefrom something hung in a long, white cotton bag. It was a fine morning in the early summer, the dew lay warm and sweet on the little garden, glittering on the first roses that bloomed to do honor to the June Sabbath day.

The sun was high, though it was only a little after seven o'clock, and the larks made a perfect riot of melody in the upper air. The little cottage on the high road to Maryport, and just without the hamlet of Mains of Ord, was embowered in green, the sweetbriar climbing so high about the posts of the garden gate that the passerby could not get a clear glimpse of the door. The air was heavy with the sharp, sweet smell of it, and the joy of summer, long delayed, was lying on the land. Janet Fairweather, a small, neat, rather white-faced woman in black, carried the white cotton bag to the broad window sill, and carefully let out the long string, which kept it together at the top. Then she put her hand in, and felt with something of a lover's touch the soft, crisp folds of silk, which had thus been carefully preserved from soil through all the years of her widowhood. It was her wedding gown. Finding there was not room to examine it carefully there, she carried it to the side of David's bed, drew it out with an almost reverent hand, and laid it down against the white coverlet.

It was a silk gown of a delicate mauve shade, wrought with flowers of a darker shade upon it, fashioned simply, with a full skirt and a pointed bodice, which had once set off Janet's slim figure to perfection.

"Eh, I would like to wear it the day," she murmured to herself in a low, cooing voice. "It's the anniversary o' my marriage and Davie's birthday, and my heart's uplifted. I wonder whether I daur?"

Her eyes glave to the dainty thing which had been hidden away for nigh twenty years—only sometimes looked at with secret tears.

"Eh, but Jamie liked it. Mony's the time I put it on to please him when my better judgment was stamnet the weather for it, and it seen—like as if he were bidding me put it on the day. Are ye, Jamie?"

She dropped the fold of the silk suddenly, and lifted her sweet, pathetic eyes to a portrait, neither conspicuously good nor conspicuously attractive, which hung in a gilt frame above the mantelpiece. It was the likeness of a somewhat heavy-featured face, of the dour old Scottish type, a long, strong mouth, greatly redeemed by a sudden, unexpected curve at the corners, and by the peculiar softness of the kindly grey eyes.

A common man, who had driven the carrier's cart between Mains of Ord and Maryport for nearly thirty years, but who had ever been a hero and a king to his wife, and whose memory was now to her a shrine.

Her eyes were soft and sunshiny, but tears were not far off. They were not so much tears of sorrow as of a tender regret. She had got over the sharper pang of her solitary life, and was so assured that presently, when her feet

grew a little more weary of the earth's pilgrimage, she should join him where sorrows are no more, that she could "thole the waiting," as she termed it.

"Davie's birthday, and I think they might hae let him hame the day; but they're terrible busy in his parish, and he canna be spared. Eh, I wonder wha'll we'll hae the day! The young lad we had last Sunday had plenty assurance an' very little grace, God forgive me for sayin' it."

She gathered up the silk gown, and carried it downstairs and laid it on the kitchen bed, where her small, quiet bonnet and her little cloak of velvet lay. There had been a great scandal in Mains of Ord when Janet Fairweather, instead of the orthodox widow's weeds, appeared the first Sunday after the carrier's death in a simple black frock and cloak, without a scrap of crape on it, and not a streamer nor a weeper to her bonnet.

"Whatever Fairweather was, and nae body can deny that he was thrash, she might shew him a little mair respect for her ain sake," said the village gossip, totally unaware that Janet was only carrying out her part of a contract made betwixt two; that a fair world should not be made needlessly hideous by the superfluous trappings of woe. It did not disturb Janet in the least then, and it did not disturb her now, as she decided to wear her wedding gown though she was well aware that some of them would stare aghast.

She hung it over the back of a chair before the kitchen fire, and proceeded to make her breakfast. She would stop sometimes as she passed to and fro to pat the pretty silk, or feel it between her finger and thumb, and then she would nod her head, while the smile deepened on her lips. She had just boiled her egg, and made her bit of toast, and was putting the tea in the pot, when a tall figure darkened the doorway, and she ran out with a little cry. David himself came home, Sunday morning as it was, carrying his little black bag, come to spend his birthday at home.

"Good morning, mother! I hope you've got something to eat. I've walked from Maryport, and I'm famishing."

"Walked frae Maryport! But what for, Davie? Eh, my man, I'm fain to see ye. I've been thinkin' on ye a' the mornin', you an' your father. Queer wasn't it, an' you on the Maryport road all the time!"

"Since the back of six o'clock; and I'm going to start on this egg, mother," he cried, as he tossed his soft clerical hat, rather irreverently, his mother thought, into a far corner of the kitchen. She ran to pick it up reverently, wiping it tenderly with the corner of her clean apron, smiling more and more.

"Start on the egg, of course; and I'll put another spoonful in the pot, and there's a bit o' nice cold ham in the press. But tell me first, my man, hoo did ye get away?"

"Well, I wasn't expected till half-past ten. They were to drive me over, but—"

"Drive you over! What for?"

"I'm preaching here today, mother, for—the vacancy."

She stopped still in the middle of the floor, and stared at him incredulously.

"Davie, you're no!" she said in an almost voiceless whisper.

He nodded, smiling slightly, as he set down his bag.

"And, mother, if I please the folk the day, it's almost a sure thing that I shall be minister of Mains of Ord."

"David Fairweather, ye are leevin'," she said, and the pink flushed her cheek.

"Am I?"

He caught her suddenly to him and pressed his brown cheek to hers, and almost lifted her off her feet.

"I ken I'm to be the minister of Ord, mother. Something has been tellin' me it all along. Firstly, I thought I would not let you know I was to preach today. But has nobody told you?"

"Naebody. But I've brocht doon my weddin' gown, Davie, for it's the anniversary o' my marriage day, and a day out of the common, besides being your birthday. An' if you're to preach, I'll be kirkin' in my marriage gown."

They made merry over it, and David praised the gown, and when she dressed herself in it, teased her by saying folk would think she was his bride instead of his mother.

But a little later, when the first bell began to tinkle sweetly through the delicious, quiet air, a deep seriousness settled upon them both. And when the moment for leaving the house came, such a trembling was upon Janet that she was glad of the support of her son's strong arm up the brae to the kirk gates. Very blithe was David Fairweather to give that arm, for in all the world he was prouder of nothing than his mother.

When sundry of them saw the glint of the soft mauve colouring under the little velvet cloak, there was an inclination to toss heads and remark that "Janet Fairweather was neither to haud nor to bind the day because her son was in the pulpit, but she might ha' minded them that were awa'."

Janet was totally unconscious of those strictures; and if she had heard them, they would not have disturbed the sweet serenity of a soul which dwelt chiefly in the upper air, where there is no din but only celestial harmony. What did concern her was that the son of her many prayers should conduct himself acceptably to the God whose service he had chosen away back in his young boyhood, without so much as one word of advice or persuasion from any.

She was not in any great fear, because her faith in him was complete; but somehow her heart yearned for a special message, because for her it was a special day. The neighbors who fancied in her some common uplifting of heart at sight of an ambition almost realized, had no idea of the holy of holies into which the widow's heart had crept, and how unconscious she was of any jarring element without.

She sang out clear and sweet, putting all her gratitude into the psalm:

"Bless, oh my soul, the Lord thy God,  
And all that in me is  
Be stirred up His holy name  
To magnify and bless."

David Fairweather made a very manly and acceptable appearance in the pulpit through the earlier part of the service; but the sermon, the crux and test of every ministerial reputation in these parts, was awaited with a good deal of anxiety and apprehension.

The text rang out true and fine—

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring good tidings, that publisheth peace."

Janet Fairweather crept back in the corner of her little square pew, grasping her handkerchief of fine linen,