

The Family Tryst.

CHAPTER II—Concluded.

A general laugh rewarded this ebullition of genius from Abel, who received such plaudits with a face of cunning solemnity—and then the eldest daughter meekly took up the word and said—

"My wages were nine pounds—there they are!"

"Oh, ho!" cried Abel, "who gave you, Agnes, that bonny blue spotted silk handkerchief round your neck, and that bonny, but gae droll-patterned gown? You had not these at the How; maybe you got them from your sweetheart." And Agnes blushed in her innocence like the beautiful flower "Celestial rosy red, Love's proper hue."

The little Nourice from the Manse laid down on the turf, without speaking, but with a heartsome smile, her small wage of four pounds; and, last of all, the little fair-haired, blue-eyed, snowy-skinned Alice, the shepherdess, with motion soft as light, and with a voice sweet as an air-harp, placed her wages too beside the rest. "There is a golden guinea—it is to be two next year, and so on till I am fifteen.—Every little helps." And her father took her to his heart, and kissed her glistening ringlets and her smiling eyes, that happily shut beneath the touch of his loving lips.

By this time the sun had declined, and the sweet, sober gloaming was about to melt into the somewhat darker beauty of a summer night. The air was now still and silent, as if unseen creatures that had been busy there had all gone to rest. The mavis that had been singing loud, and mellow, and clear, on the highest point of a larch, now and then heard by the party in their happiness, had flitted down to be near his mate on her nest within the hollow root of an old ivy-wreathed yew-tree. The snow-white cony looked out from the coppice, and, bending his long ears towards the laughing scene, drew back unstartled into the thicket.

"Nay, nay, Luath," whispered Abel, patting his dog that was between his knees, "you must not kill the poor bit white rabbit. But if a maukin would show herself, I would let thee take a brattle after her through the wood; for she would only cock her fud at a' thy yelping, and land thee in a net o' briers to scratch thy hide and tangle thy tail in. You canna catch a maukin, Luath—they're ower soople for you, you fat, lazy tyke."

The old man now addressed his children with a fervent voice, and told them that their dutiful behavior to him, their industrious habits, their moral conduct in general, and their regard to their religious duties, all made them a blessing to him, for which he never could be sufficiently thankful to the Giver of all mercies. "Money," he said, "is well called the root of all evil—but not so now. There it lies upon that turf, an offering from poor children to their poor parents. It is a beautiful sight, my bairns! That night at the How, I said this meeting would be either a fast or a thanksgiving, and that we would praise God with a prayer, and also the voice of psalms. No house is near—no path by which any one will be coming at this quiet hour. So let us worship our maker—here is the Bible."

"Father," said the eldest son, "will you wait a few minutes, for I am every moment expecting two dear friends to join us? Listen! I hear footsteps and the sound of voices round the corner of the coppice. They are at hand."

A beautiful young woman, dressed almost in the same manner as the farmer's daughter, but with a sort of sylvan grace about her that seemed to denote a somewhat higher station, now appeared, along with a youth who might be her brother. Kindly greetings were interchanged, and room being made for them, they formed part of the altar round the circle of turf. A sweet surprise was in the hearts of the party at this addition to their number, and every face brightened with a new delight.

"That is bonny Sally Mather, of the Burn-house," whispered little Alice to her brother Abel. "She passed me ae day on the brae, and made me the present of a comb for my hair, you ken, when you happened to be on the ither side o' the wood. Oh! Abel, hasna she the bonniest and the sweetest een that ever you saw smile?"

This young woman, who appeared justly so beautiful in the eyes of little Alice, was even more so in the eyes of her eldest brother. She was sitting at his side, and the wide, wide earth did not contain two happier hu-

man beings than these humble, virtuous lovers. Sally Mather was the beauty of the parish, and she was also an heiress, or rather now the owner of the Burn-house, a farm worth about a hundred a year, and one of the pleasantest situations in a parish remarkable for the picturesque and romantic character of its scenery. She had received a much better education than young women generally do in her rank of life, her father having been a common farmer, but, by successful skill and industry, having been enabled, in the decline of life, to purchase the farm, which he had improved to such a pitch of beautiful cultivation. Her heart William Alison had won, and now she had been for some days betrothed to him as his bride. He now informed his parents, and his brothers and sisters of this; and proud was he, and better than proud, when they all bade God bless her, and when his father and mother took each by the hand, and kissed her, and wept over her in the fulness of their exceeding joy.

"We are to be married at midsummer, and, father and mother, before the winter sets in, there shall be a dwelling ready for you, I hope, for many a year to come. It is not a quarter of a mile from our own house, and we shall not charge you a high rent for it, and the two-three fields about it. You shall be a farmer again, father, and no fear of ever being turned out again, be the lease short or long."

Fair Sally Mather joined her lover in this request, with her kindly smiling eyes; and what

greater happiness could there be to such parents than to think of passing the remainder of their declining life near such a son, and such a pleasant being as their new daughter? "Abel and I," cried little Alice, unable to repress her joyful affection, "will live with you again—I will do all the work about the house that I am strong enough for, and Abel, you ken, is as busy as the unwearied bee, and will help my father about the fields, better and better every year. May we come home to you from service, Abel and I?"

"Are you not happy enough where you are?" asked the mother, with a loving voice.

"Happy or not happy," quoth Abel, "home we come at the term, as sure as that is the cuckoo. Hark how the dunce keeps repeating his own name, as if anybody did not know it already. Yonder he goes—with his titling at his tail. People talk of the cuckoo never being seen—why, I cannot open my eyes without seeing either him or his wife. Well, as I was saying, father, home Alice and I come at term. Pray, what wages?"

But what brought the young laird of Southfield here? thought the mother, while a dim and remote suspicion, too pleasant, too happy to be true, passed across her maternal heart.—Her sweet Agnes was a servant in his father's house; and though that father was a laird, and lived on his own land, yet he was in the very same condition of life as her husband, Abel Alison—they had often sat at each other's table, and her bonny daughter was come of an

on rising from that prayer, the mother, looking towards her husband, said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

American Slang—How it Bothered an Englishman.

The utter ignorance of the English of the signification of American slang expressions, often causes some curious scenes between them and Yankee buyers in England, who seem to think that because their language generally is understood, all their American idioms will be. An expert buyer, junior partner in one of our large American firms, at a recent visit to his correspondent in an English manufacturing city, was complimented by the senior partner of the house, who insisted on personally showing goods to his American purchaser.

"There, sir," said Dowlas, throwing out a roll of goods, "what do you think of that?"

"O, that's played out," said the American.

"It's what?" said Bull.

"It's played, I tell you," said his customer.

"Played—ah! really—we call it *plad* h'yar in England; but this isn't *plad*—you know."

"No," said the Yankee, "I don't mean *plad*. I mean ter say it's gone up."

"Oh, no," said the Britisher, "not at all; it has not gone up; quite to the contrary. We have taken off from the price."

"Over the left; it's three pence too high now."

"No doubt of it; but our neighbors you know, on the left, are not manufacturers, you know."

"Very likely, but I don't care to be 'stuck' when I get home."

"Really—most extraordinary. Is it as dangerous in New York as the newspapers say?"

"Yes, but I don't want these goods. I've got some already that will 'knock the spots out of 'em.'"

"But, my dear, there's no spots on the goods, I assure you. They are perfect."

"Well, well; suppose we 'switch off' on these goods and try something else."

"Certainly!" and the Englishman, to the infinite amusement of the American's friends, called a clerk with a wisp-broom and directed him to "switch off" any dust he could find, while he proceeded to show something else.

"There," said the Englishman, triumphantly spreading out another fabric. "There's the 'andsomest piece of goods in England—arf a guinea a yard."

"I can't see it!" said his customer.

"Can't see it! Why, you are looking right straight at it. However, suppose you try the light of this window."

"No; I don't mean that," said the American. "I haven't got the stamps for such goods."

"Stamps! No stamps required but a bill stamp, which we are happy to furnish."

This misunderstanding might have continued longer, had not one of the younger members of the house, seeing his senior's perplexity, rescued the "Yank," and "put him through" after the manner of his countryman.

Use of Lime in Agriculture.

The action of lime is two-fold: first, physical, and second, chemical. As a mechanical agent it opens stiff clays, rendering them friable, mellow, and more easily worked; chemically, it acts upon the vegetable matter of the soil, and sets free those stores of valuable substances which, without the action of this agent, must have remained inert and useless. It also enters directly into the composition of plants, and in many varieties forms a large proportion of the weight of their inorganic constituents. It neutralizes certain acids which are often present in soils, rendering them useful in vegetation instead of being positively injurious, which they are in their original state. The existence of water in the soil, however, affects the action of lime very considerably. If the land is wet and undrained, lime will not exert the same influence which it would do in the case of thoroughly drained land. A greater quantity of lime is necessary to produce a given effect, and thus the neglect of thorough drainage entails a considerably greater expenditure in liming than would have been necessary if the land was either naturally or artificially dry.



MYOSOTIS AZORICA.



MIMULUS HYBRIDUS TIGRINUS FL. PL.

honest kind, and would not disgrace any husband either in his own house, or a neighbor's, or in his seat in the kirk. Such passing thoughts were thickening in the mother's breast, and perhaps not wholly unknown also to the father's, when the young man, looking towards Agnes, who could not lift up her eyes from the ground, said, "My father is willing and happy that I should marry the daughter of Abel Alison; for he wishes me no other wife than the virtuous daughter of an honest man. And I will be happy—if my Agnes makes as good a wife as her mother."

A perfect blessedness now filled the souls of Abel Alison and his wife. One year ago, and they were what is called utterly ruined; they put their trust in God; and now they received their reward. But their pious and humble hearts did not feel it to be a reward; for in themselves they were conscious of no desert. They came from heaven undeserved by them, and with silent thanksgiving and adoration did they receive it, like dew into their opening spirits.

"Rise up, Alice, and let's have a dance," and with these words little Abel caught his reluctant sister round the waist, and whirled her off into the open green, as smooth as a floor. The young gardener took from his pocket a German flute, and began warbling away, with much flourishing execution, the gay, lively air of "Oure the water to Charlie;" and the happy children, who had been one winter at the dancing-school, and had often danced by themselves on the fairy rings on the hill-side, glided through the gloaming in all the mazes of a voluntary and extemporaneous duet. And then, descending suddenly and beautifully from the very height of glee into a composed gladness, left off the dance in a moment, and again seated themselves in the applauding circle.

"I have dropped my library out of my pocket," said Abel, springing up again; "yonder

it is lying on the green. The last touch of the Highland Fling jerked it out. Here it is—bonny Robbie Burns—the Twa Dogs—the Vision—the Cotter's Saturday Night—and many, many a gay sang—and some sad anes, which I leave to Alice there, and other bits o' tender-hearted lasses—but fun and frolic for my money."

"I would not give my copy o' Allan Ramsay," replied Alice, "for a stall-fu' of Burns—at least gin the Saturday Night was clipped out. When did he ever make sic a poem as the Gentle Shepherd? Tell me that, Abel? Dear me, but isn't this sweet, quiet place, and the him there, and the trees, and this green plat, just as bonny as Habbie's How? Mightna a bonny poem be made just about ourselves a' sitting here so happy—and my brother going to marry bonny Sally Mather, and my sister the young laird o' Southfield? I see warrant, if Allan Ramsay had been alive, and one of the party, he would have put us a' into a poem—and aiblins called it the Family-Tryst."

"I will do that myself," said Abel; "I am a dab at verse. I made some capital odes just yesterday afternoon—I wrote them down on my slate, and Luath, licking them up, licked up a' my fine poems. I could greet to think o't."

But now the moon showed her dazzling crescent right over their heads, as if she had issued gleaming forth from the deep blue of that very spot of heaven in which she hung; and fainter or brighter, far and wide over the firmament, was seen the great host of stars. The Old Man reverently uncovered his head, and, looking up to the diffused brilliancy of the magnificent arch of heaven, he solemnly exclaimed, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth forth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. My children, let us kneel down and pray." They did so; and,