

gunna—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 fitted down to be near his mate on her nest, within the hollow root of an old ivy-wreathed yew tree. The snow white coney 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 maulkin would show herself, I would let thee take a brattle after her through the wood, for she would only cock her sud at a' thy yelping, and land thee in a net o' briars to scratch thy hide and tangle thy tail in. You canna catch a maulkin 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 behaviour 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 could never be sufficiently thankful to the giver of all mercies. "Money, said he, 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; but your parents need it not; they have enough. May God for ever bless you my dear bairns. That night at the How, I said this meeting would either be a fast or a thanksgiving, and that we would praise God with a prayer, and also with 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 minute 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 a 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 circle round the altar 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 Burnhouse," 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 of 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 those of her eldest brother. She was sitting at his side; and the wide earth did not contain two happier human beings than these humble, virtuous, and sincere lovers. Sally Mather was the beauty of the parish, and she was also an Heiress, or rather now the owner of the Burnhouse, 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 com-

mon 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 her 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, not quite so roomy as our old house at the How, but a bonny bield 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? I 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. Harken how the dunce keeps repeating his own name, as if any body did not know it already. Yonder he goes, with his tiling 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 the 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 honest kind, and would not disgrace any husband either in his own house, or a neighbour'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. The joy 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 us have a dance, and with these words little Abel caught his unwilling sister round the waist, and whirled off into the open green around, as smooth as a floor. The young gardener took from his pocket a German lute, 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 of 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 Two Dogs—The Vision—The Cotter's Saturday Night, and many, many a gay sang, and some sad ones, 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 stallion of Burns's—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 isna this sweet quiet pace, and the Linn there, and the trees, and this green plat, just as bonnie 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? Ise warrant if Allan Ramsay had been alive, and one of the party, he would have put us a' into a poem—and aibins called it the "Family Tryst." I will do that myself, said Abel, I am a dab at verse. I made some capital ones just yesterday afternoon, I wrote them down on my slate, below the sum total; but some crumbs had fallen out o' my pouch on the slate, and Luath licking them up, licked out 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 sheweth knowledge. My children let us kneel down and pray. They did so; and, 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.

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR AND HIS SONS.

The monarch was one day pensive and thoughtful. His wise men inquired the cause, and he stated that he wished to know what would be the fate of his sons after his death. The wise men consulted together, and at length it was proposed that they should put questions separately to the three Princes, who were then young. The first who entered the room was Robert, afterwards known by the surname of Courtheous. "Fair Sir," said one of the wise men, "answer me a question. If God had made you a bird, what bird would you wish to have been?" Robert answered, "a hawk because it resembles most a courteous and valiant Knight." William Rufus next entered, and his answer to the same questions was "I would be an eagle, because it is a strong and powerful bird, and feared by all other birds, and therefore it is King over them all." Lastly came the younger brother, Henry, who had received a learned education, and was on that account known by the surname of Beauclerc. His choice was a stalling, "because it is a debonnaire and simple bird, and gains its living without injury to any one, and never seeks to rob or grieve its neighbour." The wise men returned immediately to the King. Robert, they said, would be bold and valiant, and would gain renown and honour, but he would finally be overcome by violence, and die in a prison; William would be powerful and as strong as the eagle, but feared and hated