

PARTING WORDS.

CHARMING RECITATION BY LADY DUFFERIN.

The theatricals at Rideau Hall, the last in all probability which will be given there for some years, were attended by a crowded audience. Every one entered heartily into the spirit of the occasion, and the enjoyment was thorough and sincere, the artistic performance of Lady Dufferin in the two leading parts being specially appreciated. At the close of the performance Her Excellency the Countess of Dufferin recited most charmingly the following lines, said to have been written by Lord Dufferin:—

Kind friends! for such indeed you've proved to us—
Kinder than just I fear—and is it thus,
That we must quit you? Shall the curtain fall
O'er this bright pageant like a funeral pall,
And bid forever from your friendly sight
The well-known forms and faces that to-night
For the last time have plied their minute arts
To tempt your laughter, and to touch your hearts—
Without one word of thanks to let you know
How irredeemable the debt we owe
For that warm welcome, which year after year
Has waited on our poor attempts to cheer,
With the gay humour of these trivial plays,
Some few hours stolen from your busy days!
Despite ourselves, the grateful words will come,
For love can't teach a language to the dumb.
'Tis just one little smile—a tiny hand—
On paltry fare we tried our "pretence" hand,
Treading at first a less pretentious stage
Even than the goatherds of the Thespian age;
Without a curtain—for each slip—a screen,
While bedroom candles light the meagre scene,
But soon, enboldened by our public's smile,
Our Muse attempts a more ambitious style.
"The Dowager" parades her stately grace,
"Our Wife" declares two husbands out of place,
"The School" we send you, and—a slight variation—
Show you for once a really "Happy Pair."
Then having warmed your daughters not "To lend"
Their only "Lover" to a lady friend,
We next the fatal "Scrap of Paper" burn
And follow with "One Hour," "Jacques" in turn,
"Semiramis"—a Debutante's "First Night,"
Winging at each essay a loftier flight.
Until at last a bump of honour we draw
With the melodious "Mayor of St. Brevin";
These our soliloquies—but we gladly own
The praise, if praise be due, is half your own.
'Twas your encouragement that moved our wits
Conjured hysterics, sulks, tears, falling fits,
You taught our "Eugenie" those airs serene,
Those blushing Sins to drop their bashful veils,
Wherefore commissioned am I come to-day
Our hearts and laurels at your feet to lay,
And yet my task is only half fulfilled—

To the actors.

Brothers and sisters of Thalia's guild,
Who've faced with me the critic's glittering eye
And dared the terms of our gallery,
Who've lightened all my labour with your joys
And made each effort a new pleasure prove,
If words could thank you for your generous aid
These lips should but be mute to see you paid,
And oh! believe, as long as life endures,
The warm affections of my heart are yours.

To the audience.

And now, one last farewell—a few months more
And you depart your loved Canadian shore,
Never again to hear your plaudits rise,
Nor watch the ready laughter in your eyes
Glean out responsive to our author's wit,
However poorly we interpret it;
Nor see with artist pride your tears o'flow
In homage to our simulated woes.
Yet seems like these can never wholly fade
Into oblivion's melancholy shade.
And oft at home, when Christmas fires burn,
Our festive thoughts instinctively will turn
To this fair city with her crown of towers,
And all the joys and friends that once were ours,
And oft shall yearning fancy fondly fill
This hall with guests, and conjure up at will
Each dear familiar face, each kindly word
Of praise, that e'er our player's soul hath stirred.
Till, hark! the melting spell of memory
Our love draws back toward you like a sea:
For know—a halcyon way our fortunes turn—
Upon the altars of our hearts shall burn
Those votive fires no fuel need renew,
Our prayers for blessings on your land and you.

"ONLY JEAN."

I.

Minister of a parish in a densely populated manufacturing town in the south of Scotland, and having suffered severely from fever, I gladly accepted an offer made me by a friend to go for a few months in summer to take charge of a parish in the West Highlands, a remote district on the sea-coast.

In order to appreciate thoroughly the beauty of the scenery to which I went, and realize the sense of exquisite freshness given by the sea-breezes, one must have suffered as I have suffered from the constant smoke and dirt which made open windows almost a forbidden pleasure. How I had longed and panted for fresh air! and here the very act of breathing was a pleasure. As health returned, I began to wander far and wide, and one day I found myself exploring a long stretch of moor, seemingly interminable. Heather not yet in full bloom, and countless marsh flowers, were mingled together; piles of peat were drying in the wind—all this lay before me and around me, on the one hand, while, on the other, far below my feet, the sea lay sparkling as each wave caught the sunlight on its crest. On the opposite coast rose the beautiful hills of Skye; the breeze swept the clouds overhead fast, and their shifting lights and shadows made their forms seen, ever new; myriads of sea-birds whirled high above me, screaming to each other in ceaseless uproar; larks sang joyously through it all; and all the time the grand monotony of the rolling waters breaking upon the rocks chanted an accompaniment.

After walking some distance, I came to one of those sudden breaks in the land forming a glen. It was watered by a burn charged with the brown memory of a peaty soil through which it passed, and growing purer and clearer as it filtered through the stones, leaping over others as the descent grew deeper, till it fell in one lovely glittering shower into the sea.

The ground rose abruptly on either side of it, and on the banks all the way down primroses grew in utmost profusion—late primroses, such as can hardly be found elsewhere, with such exquisite freshness. Such long stems, and such luxuriant leaves; the very look brought a sudden sense of coolness and spring-tide. Beside them, in somewhat stately beauty, tall foxgloves reared their heads, just coming into bloom, and of every imaginable hue—pure white, delicate pink, with splashes of a darker colour in their hearts, and beautiful crimson, with dainty brown pencillings. Ferns grew in their tenderest greens; club mosses showed every gradation of tint, from rich emerald to olive green; a few silver-stemmed birch trees dipped and moved swayed by the wind, and forming a lovely contrast to some sturdy, stiff Scotch pines that stood at the head of the glen as though they were its sentinels.

Near these pines and sheltered by a rising ground behind it, stood a shieling or cottage, humbly built, but with evidences of unusual care in its surroundings. Nothing of the untidiness that speaks of a hurried life was there; a paling, almost concealed by honeysuckle and the common Ayrshire rose, fenced the garden; more honeysuckle was trained against the wall; and the windows stood wide open. It was the only sign of man or his habitation I had seen in my walk, and as I sat down by the bank to rest and eat my luncheon I wondered if the people living in this solitude were in any way influenced by the beauty which surrounded them, or whether they lived unappreciative lives, not knowing that their "lines" had fallen in such "pleasant places."

In a moment or two my thoughts were, in a measure, answered, the door of the cottage opened, and a girl came out with a dish under her arm piled with clothes she had been washing. She paused for a moment, as though a little dazzled by the sun, and looked round as if she thoroughly enjoyed the beauty that lay about her; and then, with a swift, light step, she came down the bank till she stood on a flat stone close to where the burn was imprisoned in a sort of pool. Setting down the clothes, she began to rinse them in clear water and wring them out, one by one, and throw them on the bank. It was the homeliest possible occupation, and her dress differed in nothing from the dress of most Highland girls—a short linsy petticoat, a jacket of some washing material, with the sleeves rolled high up above the elbow; but her gestures were full of grace, and her hair, of a rich ruddy brown, that shed a sort of light round her head, and reminded me of old pictures I had seen.

I was unwilling to remain so near her without letting her know of my presence, so I rose and went down the bank to speak to her. She answered me with the utter absence of self-consciousness and with the simple directness possessed by all fine natures; her manner was reserved but kindly, and her voice was low toned and musical. She was not beautiful, if beauty depends upon features and outline, but she had a most interesting and pathetic expression in her eyes; and when she smiled, her face lighted up wonderfully. She offered me refreshment, which I declined, but I accepted her invitation to rest for a little while in the cottage.

There is no use in trying to account for the interest claimed by one stranger when many pass by unnoticed, but from the first, before I knew her, I felt that this girl had a history, and that in some way she had suffered, and borne nobly.

The cottage at first seemed dark after the sunshine, but as my eyes became accustomed to the subdued light, I saw the figure of an old woman lying on a bed at the furthest end of the room. I had never seen any one living so absolutely devoid of color as she was—hair and face were bleached—nothing but the keen and restless look of her eyes, and the incessant movement of her long thin hands busily knitting, spoke of life.

The girl went up to her, and told her in a low voice who I was, and then placed a chair for me by the bedside; and as I sat down, I felt conscious of a peculiar feeling as though in the presence of some weird being, and I sat silent for a little by the side of this motionless figure, under the gaze of those piercing and questioning eyes. When she spoke, the impression was increased, as it was in clear shrill whisper that seemed to reverberate through the room in a manner absolutely startling.

I asked if she had been long there, and she said, "Near eleven years," with a little sigh.

"Does your granddaughter always live with you?" I asked.

She looked at me quickly. "Do ye mean Jean?" She's no my granddaughter; she's only Jean."

"Only Jean." I thought it sounded a strange way of naming the active-looking girl before me moving to and fro so quietly about household matters, but it was not said unkindly. Was it my fancy, or did a brighter colour come into her face as she heard the words?

I staid some little time there; and though the old woman (whose name I found was Elsie, commonly called Widow Grant), did not ask me to return, she looked pleased when I offered to do so; and I left the place, interested in my new acquaintances, Jean showing me a quicker but not so beautiful a way home, across the moor.

II.

The parishioners of whom I was now in charge lived in widely scattered houses, and I could not help often contrasting their lives with the lives of my own people in the South. There, every-

thing was contracted and small—space was our most needed thing: families were huddled together in houses, made more dirty and wretched by what is called a "common stair," and which it was therefore no one's business to keep clean; and though an inspection was made now and then by Sanitary Commissioners, and charitable people did their best, there are a thousand ways in which sanitary laws can be avoided; and charitable people with a few notable exceptions, have the most unhappy knack of assisting the wrong people. Who can blame them? As a rule the deserving poor are exactly those who shrink from help, and who, with a handful of meal, and hardly a potato left, show a brave face to the world, and allow no necessity to appear.

The very poor are everywhere deserving of pity; but in the country, fresh air, a little fire-wood, and above all, pure water, are to be had for nothing. In towns, the first is often not to be got; the poor cannot afford to buy the second; and when I think of the water-rate—I am no political economist—I have a most unjust dislike of the man who collects the water-rate—and I never can see why God's free gift to man should be sold by spoonfuls at the cost of many lives! However, much is being done, and more will follow.

Here, in this beautiful place, space was quite unlimited; all down the hillside linen lay bleaching in the sun, and another contrast was not only in the way it was left out all night, but in the absence of bolts, bars, and shutters, and theft was as unknown there as though a mounted guard watched incessantly over the place.

The shop (there was but one) sold every imaginable thing, from treacle and herrings to needles and cheese, and the widow who kept the shop was an autocrat in her way. She was licensed to sell spirits, and it would be good for humanity if all "licensed individuals" acted on the same firm principles. To some she positively refused to sell at all; to others she allowed only what she considered right for them to have. She knew the private affairs of each individual, and was guided by that. I have seen her refuse "a dram" to a lanky-looking shepherd who asked for one, saying to him in the tone you might use to an unreasonable child, "Hoot, aw, Sandy, ye ken weel your head is nae like other heads, and a dram will set it spinning." Na, na, man, gang hame, and duna compare your head with others!" and the man quietly withdrew with a look of sheepish resignation. To another man she said, "Surely I didna hear ye rightly; it's na a dram ye're seeking and your wife sae softer" (which did not refer to sobriety, as might be imagined, but to stickiness). When he showed temper, she said, with a change of voice that would have suited an actress, "I'm sorry I'm no spirits good enough for you, Mr. Cran, but ye'll get it at the next shop," which was exactly eleven miles off. With this carelessness for the welfare of her neighbours, she was not at all above making a close bargain; and I feel convinced and indeed my house-keeper never lets me forget it that I paid more than I ought to have done for some bandannas that I bought at her shop.

From this woman, who talked upon all subjects *à propos*, I heard a great deal about old Mrs. Grant and Jean, and everything I heard was to the credit of both. The old woman had been an excellent mother to a delicate daughter who died of a broken heart on the sudden death of her husband. The only child, "Kenneth Malcolm," had been brought up by the grandmother, and, as was often the case in Scotland, before School Boards came in the way, he received a first-rate education, and had turned out by all accounts a fine young fellow, steady and clever.

Mrs. Grant had come to Burnside more than forty years before my first acquaintance with the place; no one knew why she had come there, or anything about her antecedents. It was supposed that the old lady was acquainted with her story, but he had never told it to any one. He had requested his nephew and successor to allow her to live out her life rent free, and in addition to this, a small yearly sum was paid to her from some unknown source. She was incessantly busy, and her spinning and knitting were quite famous. Jean had gone to her when she was a well-grown child of ten, and the relations between them were more those of mother and child than of mistress and servant. When she had been there two or three years misfortunes began to come, and they never came singly! Widow Grant fell and hurt herself so much that she did not recover from the injury; then she had a paralytic stroke, and by degrees sank into a complete state of helplessness in which she was when I first made her acquaintance. Jean's devotion was unceasing, and her spinning and knitting filled up the gap when the poor old woman was helpless. Very confused and various accounts were given of how and why Kenneth had gone away. All that people knew for certain was that Jean, for the first and only time since she had lived at Burnside, had gone to Skye, and returned only the very day Kenneth had left for New Zealand, and that they had not met.

Not long after his departure, the little sum of money which made the small household so comfortable suddenly ceased; and Widow Grant had refused, in an excited and determined manner, to allow any inquiries to be made about it. Jean acquiesced. Their wants were very few, but everybody said that since Kenneth's departure she had not looked the same; and it was evident that, as in all life's histories, a romance was woven through it all. Though why, as by all accounts Kenneth had been "sair set" on hav-

ing her for his wife, she should have refused him, and have actually been the cause of his leaving the country, was beyond the comprehension of every one.

My visits to Burnside became of great interest to me. The old woman began to look forward to my arrival with much evident pleasure, and the freshness and originality of Jean's remarks were very pleasant. She had read nothing save the pages of nature so lavishly distributed round her; but everything came with such acute observance, and her mind naturally was so refined, that I used to feel when with her as if I had more to learn from her than she could learn from me.

III.

I shall always remember a certain autumnal day, not long before I left this Highland spot—a day when the golden haze of an "Indian summer" filled the air. In a valley, stretching away through the hills, some oats were ready to cut, and a neighbouring farmer, who had imported the first reaping-machine to that part of the country, had lent it for the occasion.

Every one turned out as though it were a festival. In harvest many a respectable married woman came enough to clothe herself and her children for the rest of the year. The work is pleasant to them, and they are as proud of their quickness and dexterity as any London belle of her prowess in dancing. It was certainly one of the prettiest sights I ever saw: the many colours of the various dresses, the activity and merriment as the machine worked round the field, leaving the straight lines of prostrate corn in its track to regular rows. At stated intervals one woman and a man were placed, a dexterous little hand, woven from the cut corn, was laid on the ground, and an armful of corn laid upon it; then the man's stronger fingers knotted the ends round it, and set the sheaf upright. The driver and his fellows hurried on the horses and tried to keep the workers busy; and the workers, with many a laugh and jest, exerted themselves with their utmost quickness, in order to stand ostentatiously idle before the machine came round again. Seated on the hillside, where the lingering flowers and wild thyme attracted countless bees, I watched the scene, trying to distinguish the faces I knew.

After a little while I recognized Jean, her active and upright figure one of the busiest there. As usual, she was bareheaded, and her hair gleamed like red gold in the sunlight. As usual, too, her manner had the quiet reserve that she never laid aside; and a noticeable thing was the silent respect with which the man with whom she worked treated her. He followed her footsteps as though one wishing to serve her, not as an equal.

I sat long, enjoying the peaceful and happy scene—familiarity had only made me more fond of that secluded spot—and I thought I had learned to appreciate it better, sweet events and sounds were all around me. The breeze swept past me as it rose and died away, ruffling the surface of the corn as it ruffled the surface of the sea, and hurrying the flight of the countless insects that rustled their wings among the wild flowers.

I was roused from my day-dream by seeing a little barefooted lad I knew run off to Jean and pull her gown. In a moment she had snatched up her plaid, spoken to the manager, and was gone, followed by the boy. I conjectured that the old woman was perhaps ill, but I was always afraid of intruding, and I knew that if I was wanted Jean would send for me. I left the hillside and wound my way up a steep path leading homeward. I paused at the top to rest a moment and take one other look of the brilliant and busy scene, when a clear voice began to sing a lovely Gaelic air, with a mournful refrain in a minor key. It was quaint and wild, with the pathetic sound that invariably accompanies beautiful music. Another voice joined in, and yet another; and as the voices swelled up in harmony, I thought no melody appeals so forcibly to our highest feelings as the unrestrained voices of a people, expressing in their own natural manner the untutored feeling of their hearts.

IV.

I had gone to bed late, and, as usual, had left my window open, watching as long as I could a most unusual sunset, when I was awakened by a noise that in my half-dreamy state seemed as though the sea had burst its bonds and was rushing over everything. I never remember seeing such heavy rain. It came down in torrents, bending down the heads of the sturdiest flowers in the little garden below my window, and washing all the gravel off the sloping walks. Thunder reverberated round the hills, and vivid flashes of lightning shot across the sky. A thunderstorm is never so magnificent as among mountains; and the echoes, repeated again and again till they died away in the distance, seemed almost continuous. It lasted long. Peal after peal succeeded each other; the birds, frightened and bewildered, flew from branch to branch to seek the smallest shelter, and sent forth melancholy chirps, as though to reassure themselves.

By breakfast time the rain had moderated and the thunderstorm was over, and I went out to enjoy the well-known pleasantness of the air after it, and to notice the damage my poor flowers had sustained. As I stood there I saw a figure hurrying toward me, with a plaid thrown over her head. It was Jean. She was