

CHAPTER XX.

HARVEST-TIME in Midlothian. Golden corn in golden stooks dotting the stubble-fields, yellow leaves on the ash and russet nuts on the beech, a beautiful panorama of multi-coloured landscape stretching hazily away southward and cuddling tranquilly between the Moorfoots and the Pentlands; bird song in the woods and laughter in the fields, mingling with the jolting of iron wheels and the cheery rhythmic *craik* of the levelling reaper. Little wonder Old Sol lingers long this afternoon above Castlelaw. Gladly, I ween, would he stay; but his times of rising and going down are set, and slowly but surely the shadows deepen at the base of Caerketton, and steal upward to its sheltered crown behind Allermuir.

My wife and I drove round by Roslin to-day, called at The Moat, and after having tea with my old friend Mrs Pendriegh, whose soda-scones are almost as good as Betty's, we returned 'in the hush of the corn' to Blackford Hall, *viâ* Woodfield and Fairmilehead.

This is all strange, unfamiliar country to Désirée. To-day she saw it for the first time