

his own parish, and many and fierce lawsuits have been carried on to prove an individual's right to receive parochial relief. I have known sums expended in this way that would have kept a whole family in comfort for years. After much tedious investigation of the case, and sundry vestry meetings, between the parishioners and the Committee of the work-house, the case was decided, that, in right of her husband, Margaret Drew was entitled to parochial relief from St. Margaret's Vestry. As to her claims on Langton's ill-gotten property, that was no concern of any one's. She was poor, and desolate, and friendless, and that was sufficient to close the hearts of proud, ignorant, selfish men against her.

"A miserable cabin on the waste land of the Abbey, which formerly had been used as a lazaret or pest-house, was assigned as an asylum for the wretched woman; but the bitterest drop in her cup of gall was that the scanty provision allotted for her maintenance must be sought weekly at the hands of her direst enemy—Maurice Langton. He was at that time acting overseer and churchwarden, and fain would this wicked man have withheld the miserable pittance from his victims,—such provision as parish overseers are wont to consider adequate to the support of human necessities.

"Margaret was a woman of a haughty spirit; she had never been accustomed to ask her daily bread at the hands of oppressive men, and she writhed beneath the insults that were heaped upon her, answering scorn for scorn. Truly might she be said to mingle her bread with ashes and her drink with weeping.

"Her bitter taunts had eaten like fire into the very heart of her oppressor, and he vowed she should feel his power to its fullest extent. He knew he had *unlimited power* over her—for who was there to stand up in her behalf?—who valued a useless burdensome pauper?—And while he rendered existence a burden to her by his numberless acts of petty tyranny, he laughed at her threats and impotent revilings.

"There was no need to have added one more drop to the already overflowing cup of affliction it had been her lot to drink; yet, bowed down to the very dust with misery as she was, there were still fresh evils for her in store.

"Among the poor and ignorant of the parish, the wretched woman was regarded with superstitious dread. The singularity of her dress, her manners, her solitary habits, and strange accent, formed a distinct line of separation between her and them. She never mingled with the dwellers of the place; she had no friend, no companion, save that meek dutiful girl, the sharer of her sorrows—the young Margaret; and truly the connexion between these two forlorn ones was, and ever will remain, a matter of doubt and mystery. The general opinion was

that the elder Margaret was not her mother, though the young girl always called her by that endearing name, and fulfilled towards her more than a daughter's part; but there was a tone of respect—a devotion of manner, with which the elder female always addressed her, that seemed to infer a consciousness of the child's superiority over her. Neither could any personal likeness be traced between the two, for the widow was tall and masculine, almost exceeding woman's height; her eyes were grey and fierce, and her skin of peculiar fairness, while the young girl was pale as snow, with glossy raven hair and large lustrous dark eyes; in stature she was diminutive, cast in the most delicate mould—neither bore she the most distant likeness to any of William Drew's family.

"It was said by some that the girl had been wiled away from her own kindred by the widow. Many believed the elder Margaret was a witch, others reviled her as a Popish idolator, because she mingled not in the Sabbath congregation of our church. She was, in fact, of the religion of the old Cameronians, who deemed even our worship to savour too much of Popish ceremonies.

"Maurice Langton eagerly laid hold of the popular report, that the younger Margaret was not the widow's child, to withhold a portion of the trifle allowed for her support, declaring at the same time his intention of separating them, and forcing the girl out to some service in the parish, as an apprentice, until such time as proof of her birth could be brought forward.

"Roused like a tigress about to be bereaved of her young, the unhappy widow sprung up from the miserable pallet on which her sick and wasting form reclined, and seizing on the arm of the hard-hearted Langton, and closing her long bony fingers over it with a gripe he vainly strove to shake off, she vehemently exclaimed:

"She is mine—no power on earth shall tear her from me! These arms have borne her; this aching breast pillowed her infant head; these eyes have wept and watched for her; these hands worked for her, while strength was left them. Monster! you have robbed the widow of her rights in the land, but ye shall not rob her of her child, her only solace among many sorrows."

"Awd by the strength of her despair, the overseer withdrew, and Margaret was left to share the sorrow of her only friend.

"Not long after this the poor girl proffered her services to my father, to perform such tasks in the fields as suited her youth and strength.

"It was a sad sight to see a form so fragile labouring among the rude peasant girls, and to see hands so fair and soft soiled with those menial tasks she proudly yet quietly volunteered to perform, that she might not be burdensome to the parish for her maintenance.