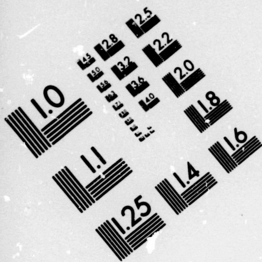

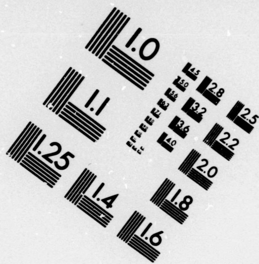

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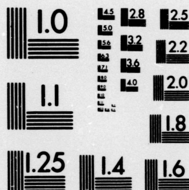

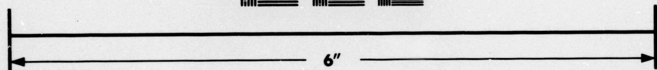

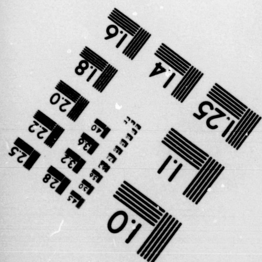

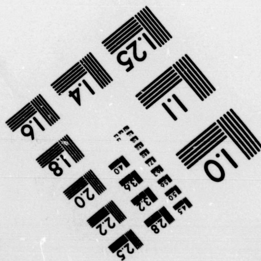

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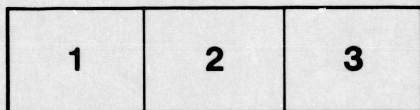

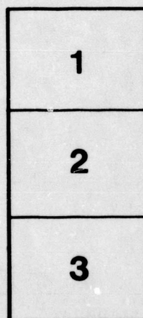

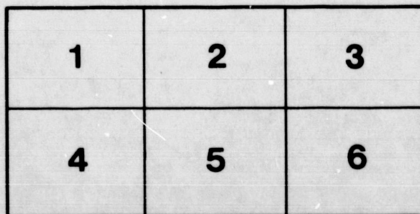

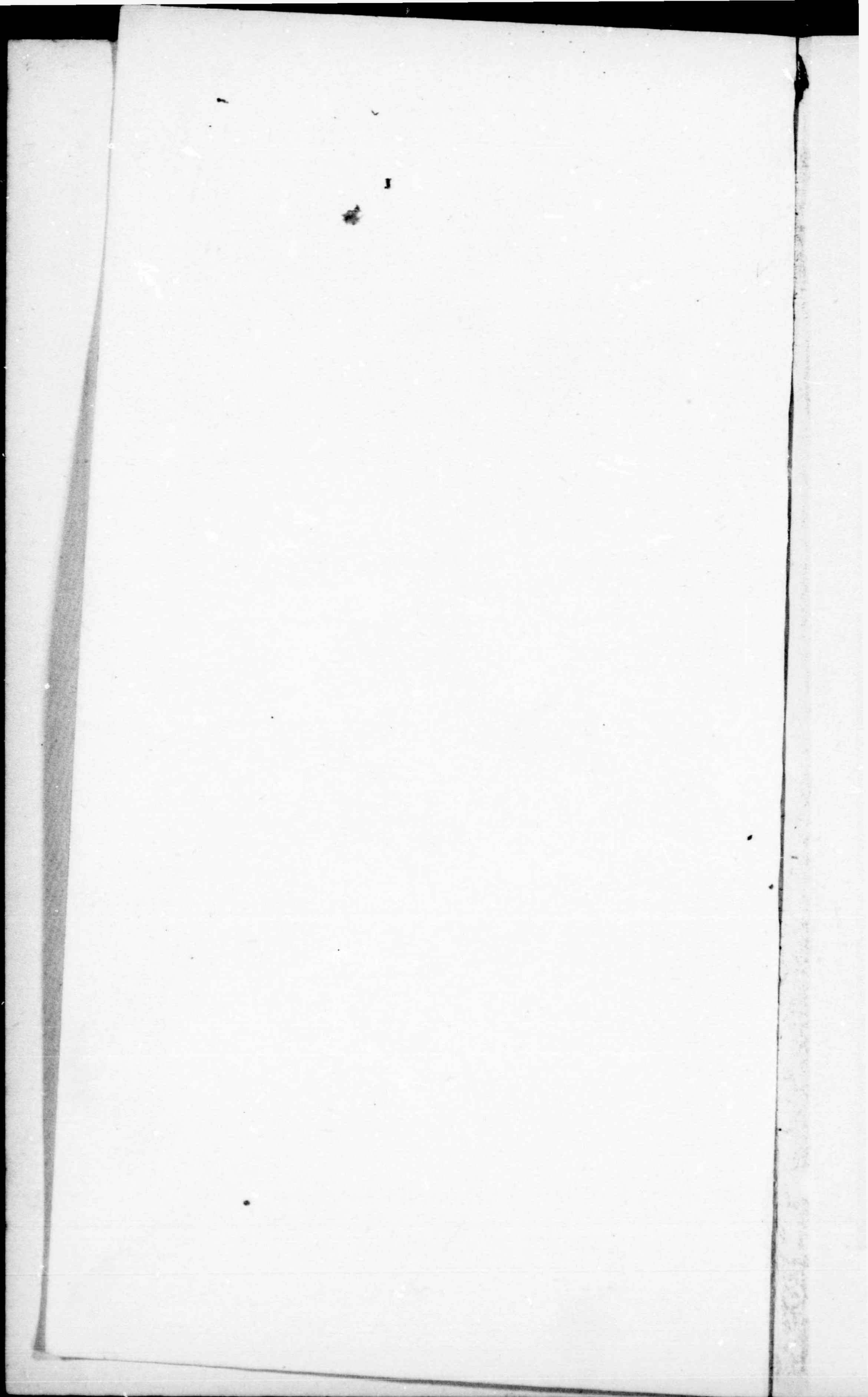

EUPHIE LYN

EUPHIE LYN

OR

THE FISHERS OF OLD INWEERIE

BY

MRS. J. K. LAWSON

AUTHOR OF
'A VAIN SACRIFICE,' ETC. ETC.

EDINBURGH & LONDON
OLIPHANT ANDERSON & FERRIER
1893

DEDICATED

TO THE

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EUPHIE LYN.

CHAPTER I.

INWEERIE SCHOOLDAYS.

INWEERIE was, and is yet, a typical fishing village, peopled by fisher-folk only. The incidental baker, grocer, tailor, shoemaker, or 'licensed to sell' individual, existed but to minister to the wants of the seafaring population, and, given industry and business ability, generally managed to make a paying thing of it—bad debts, no profits, and the usual sibboleth of trade to the contrary notwithstanding.

It is true that as such prospered they as a rule began to spread themselves out in turkey-cock fashion, privately holding the common folk in high disdain, but then a wholesome dread of losing valuable custom prevented them from expressing this feeling, unless with bated breath within the guild. It was a town also in which evil-speaking was reduced to the minimum, not exactly from principle, but from a wholesome dread of the person spoken of, or perhaps some relative who felt the family reflected on, suddenly

dashing in upon the repeater of a slander with fierce visage and sledge-hammer fists shaken dangerously close to the traducer's nose, while in a voice pitched to high C, the personal pedigree of the incautious one was shown up and its memorable points dilated on to the delectation of the listening neighbours assembled round the door. Thus, by the application of the rule *similia similibus curantor*, evil-speaking was reduced to a safe science of phrases capable of double interpretation should explanation be demanded; to pantomimic sniffs and innuendoes; and to looks, mute as the grave, but conveying thoughts 'too big for utterance.' All this, however, was nigh half a century ago, and how much the world has progressed since then, to be sure! How much human nature has changed!

Meantime, then as now, Mother the Sea fed them all. But for this she exacted hard work, long and irregular hours, a certain bravery, unlimited patience, and unquenchable hope.

Then as now, strangers coming to the town and seeing the fishermen pacing 'quarter-deck' upon the pier, inclined to think them stolid—stolid as the bowed landsman whom the heavy hand of incessant toil and poverty has crushed the manhood out of, leaving only the dull, obedient animal trudging stiffly to the grave. Not so. The alert but unruffled calm of the fishermen is the result of a life-long discipline of patience.

When you go up to speak to them, you will find that they neither lift the cap nor touch the forelock after the manner of those accustomed to be subject to others; they stand up straight, look-

ing searchingly at you—man to man. For in this whole town of fishers master and man is a relation unknown, all being equal; and as you begin to talk with them, they will quietly take stock of you, trying to divine whether you are a man, or merely an imitation, and according to their judgment of you, so will their manner be.

And the idleness, which has perhaps struck you with wonder, you will find to be enforced. These bluff, ruddy men in blue are no loafers.

But, unless they wish to suicide *en masse*, Mother the Sea must be watched, even in her most smiling moods. For, let the north-east wind but sally forth, and she is up at once, green and angry, her long white hair streaming behind her as she rushes raging upon the rocks, while all the coast echoes the sound of her roaring.

Moreover, the lines are all baited and carried down and placed ready in the yawls rocking over yonder by the West Pier, and the nets are set down in the big boats that go out to the deep sea fishing, with the great lines tidily packed coil upon coil into the 'rips,' and the hooks stuck fast all round like a corded rim of white metal; but until the Sea shall have come out of her tantrums, and the hand of the barometer incline to 'Fair,' there is nothing for it but to wait.

And he who, having done everything, can possess his soul in patience and wait, when everything is waiting on him, with the rent due and the coal burning done; with the children's shoes wearing out, and a bill running up to the grocer, who has begun to serve out the necessaries with an audible sigh,—the man who can quietly wait in such circumstances, nor grumble

nor chafe, has learned one of life's most difficult lessons.

But, indeed, this life of mute combat with circumstance generally began at school—the old parochial school, the only one in the place, if we except a little house of two apartments, which stood along the West Shore, having an outside stair and one small window, built in those days when statesmen laid a tax upon the light of the sun. Here lived two maiden sisters, incomers from nobody knew where; and here the elder sister, bearded and spectacled, taught the feminine idea how to shoot in the direction of plain sewing and knitting, thereby earning an arduous and difficult livelihood; while Peggy, the younger, sold beef in the cellar below stairs.

This, however, had no connection whatever with the parochial school, which, though built on a rock, stood amid the sands, with the sea washing the windows every high tide, the only washing they ever got. From time immemorial the place had been infested with rats.

Here the venerable schoolmaster stood up one particular day at noon dismissal; and, after announcing the usual Wednesday half-holiday, concluded thus—

'Any boys who wish to come back to the school in the afternoon to catch rats, let them hold up their hands.'

The hand of every boy in the place went up as high as it could reach.

'Oh—ho, ho!' laughed the master, 'this will never do. I think six will be enough.'

The young faces lengthened unanimously, but no hand was withdrawn.

'I think,' said the master, wiping his spectacles with his handkerchief, 'the best thing would be to select the six boys who have behaved best this week.'

The boys looked at each other; a shamefaced, roguish flicker of laughter illuminated their countenances, and one by one the hands descended.

'Come out here to the floor a dozen or so who have been behaving well, and I'll see.'

The boys hung their heads, and laughed and nudged each other, none feeling good enough to get up first.

'You, Tom Innes, David Baxter—come out here.'

As soon as they rose there were plenty of other volunteers, until about a score stood candidates for the honour of rat-catchers.

'Bob Syme, didn't you tramp down Mrs. Brown's curly-kail plants yesterday?'

'Tam Gowans shoved me,' pleaded Bob in extenuation.

'I didna,' spoke up Tam in defence.

'Well, you will both go to your seats, and don't let me hear any more complaints of that kind.'

The two went to their seats, crushed, and the master fixed a chilly stare on a roguish, bright-eyed lad of fourteen, who waited with ill-concealed eagerness for election.

'What do *you* want, Andrew?' he demanded in his driest manner.

The boy hesitated, then answered—

'I can catch rottens.'

The master looked upon the floor, and passed

his hand across his face slowly, trying to smooth out a smile which had begun to pucker the corners of his eyes.

'Yes, I have no doubt of that,' he responded, with a sonorous gravity that made an impression; 'you can do a great many things, Andrew. For instance, you can climb up on an old woman's thatch roof and lay your slate upon the chimney until the old body is smoked out, and when she slips out at the door and down the close with a large jug of water holding behind her to drown her persecutors with, you sneak up behind her and smash the jug with a stick. Then you can also glue cockle-shells on to the cat's feet, and lock it up into Saunders Johnston's garret, frightening them so much that they turn out of their beds at two o'clock in the morning, sure that the house is haunted. Are you aware that Captain Shaw's parrot cries "Drunk again!" every time the captain comes into the house? I suppose you know who taught him that?'

The culprit hung his head, but the boys burst into a laugh that the master did not try to repress, for the care Andrew had taken to instruct the captain's parrot on every opportunity was well known to them all. Andrew slunk to his seat, feeling that Nemesis was upon him; but the master was not done with him yet.

'Perhaps you will explain why you got hold of Tom Gowans over there and shook him like a rat, and sent him home to his mother with a bleeding nose?'

Andrew did not answer. He was, like Pharaoh's chief butler, remembering his faults, and wondering how the master knew every-

thing, when he was startled by a girl's voice saying—

'Please, sir, he thrashed Tam Gowans because he stealt my aipple.'

The master glanced over to where a pretty little girl, with red hair and brown eyes, had just risen up, with her face all aflame.

'Oh, ho! then Tam Gowans deserved what he got, and'—

Here the school door opened slowly, and a stout woman, attired in a blue duffle petticoat and shortgown, with a mutch on the back of her head, and with a piece of soapy wet flannel in one hand and a towel in the other, presented herself, with a suave smile of apology, before the master.

'Maister Buchan, ye maunna be angry at me comin' in, ye ken; but, ye see, the minister's comin' doon to bapteeze a no'-weel bairn in oor hoose, an' that blackgaird, oor Tam, do you think for the life o' me I can get that scoondrel to wash his face? No' me! he'll no' mind a word I say. But I tell't him this mornin'; says I, "Tam, if you dinna wash your face, so as to be decent when ye come hame, an' the minister in the hoose, as shure's death I'll come an' wash it in the schule." Whaur is he, Maister Buchan?'

'Tom Gowans!'

No answer, and no Tom to be seen. He had dived down under the benches, and crawled among the feet of the children away to the back of the school.

'Tom Gowans!' thundered the master.

'Please, please, sir—he's here,' piped a little girl, getting up in unmistakable fear and alarm.

'The scoondrel!' exclaimed the irate mother; and, striding down between the rows of forms, she dived with the swoop of a seagull under a desk, and fished him up, fierce and resistant, to the surface.

'I'll learn you to rin oot every mornin' withoot washin' your face, disgracin' decent folk! I'll let you ken wha's maister—you or me!' she blustered, as he lay pinned to the floor with her knee upon his breast, while she rubbed the soap vigorously into his eyes, amid the loud laughter of the children. It was in vain that he spat and sputtered and hammered with his heels upon the floor; she rubbed and polished him off till his cheeks shone like a ruddy apple, and then she rose, remarking apologetically to the master as she passed out—

'His haffits are no' very clean, but he'll dae noo till Sabbath.'

Tom sat upon the floor, the tears in his eyes, his heart and brain scorching with the shame he had undergone before the whole school. Revenge! Revenge, hot and speedy, was the one devouring feeling in his soul, when a happy idea occurred to him. His cuffs were moist with the struggle to get the wet flannel out of his mother's hand; he raised them and sponged his face afresh, then lay down and rubbed it back and forth upon the dusty floor, until he became quite unrecognisable, and thus, to his mother's horror, he entered the house just as the minister rose up to christen the child.

CHAPTER II.

EXIT—TOM GOWANS.

'YES, Andrew,' resumed the master, after Tom Gowans had dashed out of the back-door intent on his revenge, 'you can do a good many things. For instance, you meet two boys coming down the moor with a nest of young birds in their hand, and up goes your fist into their eyes, and you seize the nest and carry it back and place it in the hedge again, threatening murder to the boys if they dare go near them. Eh?'

The two boys whom Andrew had punished for robbing the nest slunk out of sight behind the backs of those sitting in front of them.

'Then, when you see half a ton of coals lying at old Eppie Scott's door, you volunteer to carry them in for her, and won't even take the fine treacle bannock she spreads for you when you had carried them all in and swept up the door with her heather besom. And poor old Eppie thinks you the best boy in the town, and never suspects that it was *you* who smoked her out and broke the jug she carried behind her to drown you with. Yes, Andrew, after all these exploits and many others quite as characteristic,

I have not the slightest doubt that you could catch rottens. Indeed, I think I shall have to make you captain of the rat-catchers this afternoon, just to keep you out of mischief.'

Andrew, whose toes had been tracing aimless curves and lines upon the floor to keep himself in countenance during this scathing rebuke, now looked up, but catching a peculiar twinkle in the admonishing eye, suddenly looked down again; and while the master picked out another four boys, it took him winking hard to keep back the hot tears. Indeed, once he surreptitiously drew his sleeve across his eyes. He would rather have taken a thrashing than an address like this, where the master first exposed his misdeeds and then slew him with his forgiveness, as he did now.

'Now, Captain Andrew Craig,' said the master, turning to Andrew without looking at him, 'here are your four men for the afternoon hunt. The fifth — well, you can bring Tom Gowans along, by way of compensation for the lie Bob Syme has told on him.'

Bob started and reddened visibly, but looked defiance.

'I happen to know that when Mrs. Brown's curly-kail plants were trodden down, Tom Gowans was at Pittenweem. So, Bob Syme, come up to the floor.'

Bob, with a sour visage, sidled up slowly, and the master drew forth a long strip of leathern 'tawse.'

'Who knows the Ninth Commandment?' he cried, appealing to the whole school.

Up went every hand, big and little, dirty and clean.

'Repeat it.'

'*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour,*' chanted the whole school promptly.

'Well, what is false witness against a neighbour?' pursued the master.

Dead silence ensued. They knew dimly what it meant; the trouble was how to give it proper expression. It was the Scotch peculiarity of mind, understanding without expression.

'You, Euphie Lyn, come, let me see you put all these boys to shame. What is false witness against a neighbour?'

Euphie rose, blushing furiously above her white pinafore, and answered in a clear voice—

'Please, sir, it's tellin' lees on him.'

The boys all turned round and looked at the clever girl of the school; and Andrew Craig smiled encouragingly, which made her blush again as she sat down.

'Yes, that's it, Euphie. A lie is the only thing I will not suffer to go unpunished in this school. There are lies and lies, all more or less mean, but this is the lie of the coward. Hold up your hand, sir.'

The culprit slyly drew down the cuff of his jacket as far as he could over his palm and held it up; but the master said, 'The other hand,' and, pronouncing the letters of the word *l-i-e*, he brought down the tawse in three stinging whacks. At the third whack Bob uttered a cry, doubled up, and blew upon his hand, hot tears filling his eyes.

'Now, go to your seat, and remember, the way of transgressors is hard,' said the master sternly, after which he dismissed the school.

That evening, as Andrew came sauntering down through the whins over the moor, a girl's scream rang out shrilly, and he turned and made straight to the place whence the sound proceeded. There, behind a hedge, on her way home from a neighbouring farm, stood Euphie Lyn, crying and shrinking back as she held up her little milk pail to ward off the nearer approach of a dead rat, which Bob Syme was menacingly swinging by the tail close to her face.

'Ay nae! Ye thocht ye was awfu' clever, gettin' me into a lickin' the day. What was your business if I tell't lees or no'? I've gude mind to gar ye eat this rotten, an' '—

Here a rustling in the hedge behind caused him to pause, and as he turned and caught a glimpse of Andrew Craig fiercely breaking in through the gap, he dropped the rat and fled, the avenger behind him.

'*You'll* shake a rotten in the lassie's face!' he gasped, as they both fell—Andrew uppermost—over a bracken bush. 'I'll—I'll let ye see whether ye will, ye muckle cooard! I'll—I'll'—But here speech became lost in action. He pounded and dug his fists into Bob's anatomy everywhere with such fury, that Bob, feeling defence impossible, seized the opportunity of a breathing moment to get up and run. Andrew was too exhausted to follow, and turned back to where he had left Euphie. But she had sped home with the milk, and Andrew followed slowly, his passion cooling as he went.

His way home lay past Mrs. Lyn's garden dyke, and as he passed along, some one softly called—

'Andrae! Andrae!'

'Oh, is't you, Euphie? Never mind, my lass,' said Andrew, turning and smiling blithely. 'Never you mind. I've gi'en him his corn. He'll better no' try that again.'

Euphie stood still, with one shoulder against the dyke, holding something underneath her pinafore.

'D'ye like sugar elephants, Andrae?' she asked.

'Ay, fine,' replied Andrew expectantly.

Euphie slowly drew her hand from under her pinafore, and offered him what was in it.

Andrew at once bit off the elephant's trunk, and crunched it with evident relish.

'But what's this?' he queried, holding up a small book-mark, with a blue ribbon attached, which she also gave him.

'That's for your Bible. Read it,' said Euphie.

'*Remember me*,' read Andrew aloud; and, with a shy smile, Euphie ran into the house.

But this eventful week was not yet over. Mrs. Gowans, as has been seen, was a pushing, energetic woman, a grey mare who was by a long way the better horse in the matrimonial team. Under her prompting and guidance, her husband Tammas, a quiet, inoffensive man, whose one unfulfilled desire was to lead a peaceable life, had become the owner of a boat, a house, and plenty of good sea-gear. Her windows were of the brightest, her house the cleanest; no higher polished fender, no whiter hearthstone or more daintily sanded floor, could be found between the kirk on the west, or the Pans on the east, of the town. It took her a full hour and

more every Saturday to dust the fine array of coloured glass vases which, with a china dog at each end, adorned her mantelshelf, to say nothing of the two great glass globes enclosing wreaths of artificial flowers, which Tammas had brought to her from Yarmouth when he was courting her, and which had stood on top of the stately chest of mahogany drawers ever since she took up house. These drawers were only matched in magnificence by the tall eight-day clock, which stood up between the two box-beds, with brass cupolas and mahogany horns upon its head, and the maker's name handed down to posterity in large letters across the dial-plate. The beds seemed too good to sleep in, so neatly were the snowy quilts laid with a fold along the front, the crimson curtains enhancing their whiteness.

Hitherto Mrs. Gowans had ruled with undisputed authority, shaping the plastic material of which her husband and her other children were made, just as it suited her; but now in Tom she found herself confronted with a will as strong as her own. She was continually trying to conquer her own intensified duplicate, and the result generally was a drawn battle, with the victory tending to Tom. Of late she had thought of trying conciliatory tactics, and this morning had presented him with a new pair of moleskin trousers as a sort of truce to hostilities. The trousers he put on, with the new red braces above his blue jersey, so that they could be seen; but the jacket—no. No argument would induce him to put on that jacket, so off he went to school in the new moleskins, blue jersey, and

flaming red braces, the peak of his cap down in the nape of his neck.

Although it was summer, the master, for his own personal comfort, generally kept on a small fire in the large wide fireplace, and it was now burned down to white ashes, being late in the afternoon and near dismissal-time. A knock came to the door, and as the master opened it the boys got a glimpse of a packman selling books, and rejoiced. When *that* bookman came round, and the master put on his hat and shut the door to examine the pack, there was always plenty of time for a little fun ere he came in again. A geography class of some ten of the biggest boys were standing with their toes upon a crescent which the master had traced upon the floor with chalk, but as the time passed they began to get restive, and forgot to toe the mark.

'The fire's oot,' remarked Tom Gowans, looking around.

'No, it's no',' said Bob Syme.

'What'll ye wager?'

'Tippence.'

'I would like to see the tippence,' sneered Tom; but Bob Syme fished up two coins from his pockets, and held them up with triumphant ostentation. A thrill of despairing envy ran through the class, for they were only fishers' bairns, whereas Bob's father kept 'a public,' and had always plenty of bawbees.

'Stick your thoom i' the aise an' ye'll see,' suggested Andrew.

Bob stepped over, and gingerly stuck his thumb into the grey ash, but instantly with-

drew it, spitting like a cat upon the scorched member.

'He's just pretendin' he's brunt,' sneered Tom. 'I wouldna be feared to sit on that fire till the maister comes in.'

'I would like to see ye try it,' retorted Bob.

'Try't, try't! Try't, Tam; we'll tell ye when the maister's comin',' said they all; and thus urged, Tam stepped over, and, cautiously getting his head up the chimney, sat down on the top of the ashes, with his legs hanging down in front of the fireplace, to the delight of the whole school.

'Is't het, Tam?' asked several, as eagerly as though he were winning the Derby.

'Het? No!' quoth Tom, with lofty scorn; and the whole class faced round to watch the hero of the moment, and how long he would sit.

Tom leant back against the sooty chimney, folded his arms, and surveyed them all with dignified defiance; while outside the door the master, pleased to miss the usual outbreak of din when he went out, indulged in a more lengthy chat than usual.

Presently, however, Tom began to fidget.

'Is't het, Tam?' inquired Andrew Craig.

'Het!' retorted Tom fiercely; 'hoo can it be het when it's black oot? It's—it's just a wee thingie warm.'

Tom laid hold of the jambs and eased himself up a little, crossing his legs and folding his arms. He had pushed back the brown hair from his eyes with his sooty hands, and what with the smut and the attitude he took, he

looked, framed in the fireplace, not unlike some heathen idol.

'Better come doon,' suggested Andrew Craig.

'No,' spoke Mrs. Gowans' son; 'I said I would sit on the fire till the maister comes, an' I'll sit.' And he slid down closer into the ashes.

But, in spite of all this bravado, it was clear Tom was far from comfortable. Through the smut his face began to redden; he tried to shift about unobserved, when a tense whisper of 'The maister!' reached him, and he hurriedly climbed down. He was making for the crescent round which the boys now stood with their backs toward him, when the master, with a sudden exclamation of alarm, came across Tom with a swinging swish of the tawse. Tom uttered a wild scream, and sprang up over the desks toward the back-door, which he found locked; while the ignited moleskin, already smoking, began to flame with the wind of his going, and there was a smell as of cloth burning.

Immediately the school broke up in the wildest uproar, the master and big boys chasing Tom, in order to extinguish the fire; Tom, desperate with pain and heat, plunging, leaping, dodging, knocking every one over in a mad attempt to get out and escape the dreaded tawse. At length he eluded them all, reached the door, and bolted, the whole school after him. Tom cleared the steps at a bound, ran down the sands to where the tide, blue and limpid, came gurgling in over the rocks, and promptly sat down in the cooling waters.

He fled the town that night. His mother that

afternoon had gone to Elie, so his misfortune was unnoticed, especially as he took care to slip about sideways like a crab when, with his father, he came in to tea, his last meal, which he ate with an uncontrollable feeling of chokiness. Her wrath he might have braved, for it was loud and soon over; but the laughter, the gibes of his companions, the new nickname he had already heard shouted round a corner at him—no, never! He knew, as surely as that he was a living and repentant boy, that he would never hear the end of this, so he drew his savings out of the bank, the little 'pirlie-pig' that stood in the far back corner of his bed-shelf, the money he had been hoarding up to buy 'a pair o' doos' with—elevenpence in all; and, with a small loaf of bread and two buffed herrings tied up in the jacket he hated so to wear, he set out after dark to make his way in the world.

The high-road eastward out of the town led up to an eminence called the Taft Hill, from the top of which one could get a good view of the west before descending on the opposite side. Here Tom stopped, threw down his bundle on the grass, and, drawing his sleeve once or twice across his eyes, looked mutely back towards the town. The moon had risen, and from the shore away over to shadowland a silvern path of light wimpled invitingly; but Tom took no note of it. His eyes were turned to where the quaint conical tower of the old church rose up dimly in a corner of the night; the rest of the town was all a dark, confused blur. A quick, convulsive sob escaped him; he hesitated, lifted the bundle slowly, and began to retrace

his steps, when he suddenly wheeled about again, dashed his arm once more across his eyes, and soon the little figure, with the bundle upon its shoulder, bobbing bravely along in the moonlight, was seen no more.

Good-night, Tom, and God be wi' ye, for even of such stuff as you are brave men made.

CHAPTER III.

A DISREPUTABLE BOOK.

AH, well! away yonder at the west end of the town, on the placid green slope dipping down to the burn on one side, and on the other to the sea, sleeps the schoolmaster among many of his scholars; the shadow of the old church, like that of a dial, moving over them with sun and with moon, indicating the hours of time above the place where time is now no more. The children are children no longer; the lessons they learn now are taught in a sterner school.

Euphie Lyn has long since outgrown pinafores, being now a maiden of eighteen, with hair like corn ripened by the sun; a pair of clear dark eyes, that at once challenge notice by contrast of hair and complexion; and a straight, shapely figure, set off by a clear lilac print gown and white apron. Moreover, she has two lovers; and here, as elsewhere, the course of true love runs with its usual perverseness. For Andrew Craig is a young fisherman, with but a fisherman's luck, and a widowed mother to support; and though it is well known that he and Euphie, ever since their schooldays, have been dear as

light unto the eyes to each other, still Mrs. Lyn, though but a fisherman's widow herself, continues to propound this question: 'What has he?'

What he *is*, is nothing to the point. Intelligent, true-hearted, brave; with a stainless life, a pair of willing hands, and a manly, honest love—granted. But what does all that amount to when you come to reduce it to pounds, shillings, and pence?

'Naething, nihil, naething!' insisted Mrs. Lyn. 'But there's Bob Syme, a braw man, whose father died a few years syne, leavin' him "the business," with the licence sure to be renewed; a well-conducted young man, and well-dressed, with a' that fine property made aff the business,—a man that need never cast his coat to do a day's work from the one year's end to the ither. Such a splendid doonsittin'!'—What! If Euphie was fool enough to turn up her nose at such a chance, *she* wasn't; and if Andrew Craig didn't get a flea in his ear one of these days, it would be none of her fault.

Such was the state of affairs one Lammas morning when Euphie came skipping in, in great excitement.

'Mither, whaur is yon auld oilskin petticoat o' yours that used to hing i' the garret?'

'An oilskin coat? What d'ye want wi' an oilskin coat?'

'I'm gaun to the herrin', mither; there's herrin' i' the Haiks, an' the boats are a' comin' in load to the gun'les, an' the curers canna get enough women to pack them.'

''Deed, than, ye're no' gaun one fit. What would folk think o' me if I let ye gang to the herrin'?'

'It's nane o' folk's business what I dae. I'm gaun to the herrin', mither, to earn some honest bawbees. I never hae a penny I can ca' my ain.'

'Wait, an' I'll send ye to the dressmakin'; it's mair genteel.'

'An' to wait a' that time—a year or twa—afore I can mak' onything? No, I'm gaun to the herrin', an' if ye winna gie me your petticoat I'll gang withoot.'

'Oh, weel, please yoursel'; the coat's in the garret hingin',' said Mrs. Lyn, who had a shop, or what she modestly called 'a sma' way o' doin',' and had been already infected with the aristocratic exclusiveness of trade and love of the 'genteel.'

'It's just the way wi' bairns when ye bring them up,' she explained to a customer; 'but, ye ken, ye canna pit an auld head on young shouthers. Let her gang to the herrin', she'll sune get her tirin' o't. She's like mony mair, she disna ken when she's weel-aff. Deed, ay! Tippence an' thrippence is fivepence, an' fivepence for twa pund o' sugar, that'll be tenpence; that's just tippence I've to gie you in.'

Mrs. Lyn took up the shilling and returned the twopence; but though the customer took it up, she hesitated to go.

'D'ye ken Andrae Craig's folks in wi' a grand shot? They were in first this mornin', and got a fine price—a pound the barrel, an' they've aichty if they've a cran. By faigs! if

he hauds on like this, he'll be ca'in' it aff wi' Euphie at the end o' the drave.'

'Ca'in it aff wi' oor Euphie!' snorted Mrs. Lyn, with her nose in the air. 'Na, na; Euphie doesna need to tak' up wi' ony fisher. My lassie has ither prospecks, Jennie lass.'

'Aweel, there's some folk pleased to say that, onyway; and Andrae Craig is a fine chap, an' a gude son to his mither.'

'I'm no' sayin' onythin' again' him, Jenny, but he's no' for oor Euphie. I'll no' say but what she *micht* be marrit gin the end o' the drave,—things are no' a' settled yet,—but it'll no' be to Andrae Craig.'

The customer passed out of the shop, looking somewhat puzzled. She couldn't make this thing out, for if Euphie was not to marry Andrew Craig, it was a very strange thing why they always went up to Greendykes Farm together for curds and cream on Sunday evenings with the other lads and lasses.

'When ye get as muckle fisher-wark as I've haen in my day, ye'll no' be sae fond o't,' Mrs. Lyn remarked, as Euphie came down from the garret arrayed in the petticoat over her dress, and her golden hair full of cobwebs. 'Guttin' herrin' is nasty, clarty wark, an' folk 'll no' forget to cast it up to ye, maybe when ye're braw and weel-aff, hoo ye ance wrocht amon' the herrin'.'

'There's little chance o' me ever bein' sae weel-aff as a' that,' laughed Euphie, stripping off the petticoat, and proceeding to array herself in old clothes that wouldn't spoil.

'If ye dinna, it's your ain fau't,' retorted Mrs. Lyn significantly.

Euphie kept silence, quite understanding what her mother meant. After a little she went up to the mirror.

'Eh,' she cried, with a laugh, as she saw herself, 'sic a head wi' moose-wabs! That garret's just fu' o' ettercaps. I wonder, mither, what way my head's sae yellow and yours sae black? Was my father's hair like mine?'

'What gars ye spier sic daft-like questions?' fretted Mrs. Lyn in a snappish tone.

'Me? Naething. It just cam' in my head to spier. Ye needna be sae soor aboot it, mither. What gars ye aye speak sae hard to me?' asked Euphie, looking hurt.

'Hard? D'ye think I havena reason to be hard, to see you gaun throwin' yoursel' awa' on a puir naething o' a fisher wi' an auld mither to keep up, when a wag o' your little finger could bring ye a doonsittin' that would mak' a leddy o' ye?'

'Mither, dinna speak aboot it. I canna bear that Bob Syme; he's an ill e'e in his head. I'm no' wantin' a man; but if I did, he would hae to be a gude ane.'

'A gude man 'll no' gie a lassie like you blackgaird books to read, would he?'

Euphie started guiltily; her face flamed crimson. She looked into her mother's face a moment, then mutely dashed up-stairs; while Mrs. Lyn chuckled, '*That* nickit her!'

Euphie sprang over to the box-bed in her own little room, and snatched up the pillows. There was nothing under them. She pulled the bedclothes out upon the floor, and turned the tick up. There was no book there. Then she made

the bed up again, shaking out the blankets carefully, but still she found no trace of the book she had been reading, night after night, long after her mother had gone to sleep down-stairs. She explored the table-drawer, behind the big chest, everywhere, but saw no sign of it. Then she went up to the little looking-glass, and looked long into its depths, and saw a fair face, with an abundance of hair, yellow as the flaxen curls of childhood, coiled and twisted and fastened with a comb on the back of her head; while a pair of sweet lips were pressed together firmly, and two bright brown eyes angrily flashed the question, 'Where can it be?' Euphie was of a nature that could suffer long and be kind, but she had begun to resist her mother's too oppressive domination of late, and now ran down-stairs, prepared to defend herself. Mrs. Lyn was grimly knitting in the big chair.

'What did ye dae wi' the book, mither?'

'Oh, I've the book a' safe enough.'

'But I want it, mither; it's no' mine.'

'No, it's no' yours; I ken that. I saw Andrae Craig's name in't. A shame an' a disgrace for onybody to own sic a book, far less a chap that gaed forrit an' joined the kirk a whilie syne.'

'I want the book, an' I maun get it, mither,' said Euphie, so quietly that Mrs. Lyn looked at her a minute or so, and then, easing herself up, pulled from under the chair-cushion a leather-bound copy of Shakespeare.

'It's the awfu'est book ever I read. The bad language in't is perfectly fearsome. An' the folk's morals! Ae lass, a Mrs. Macbeth, eggin'

on her man to kill the tither man; a black-a-moor smotherin' his ain decent wife; young leddies trampin' aboot in men's claes amon' witches an' a' kind o' evil speerits, ane o' them half a man an' half a cuddy; to say nae-thing o' a daft auld carle they ca' Lear, a man that should hae been lockit up i' the madhoose, if it was for naething but for his ill-scrapit tongue! Ca' ye *that* readin' for a decent young woman?'

'Mither, ye've read mair o' Shakespeare than I've done. I've only gotten through "Hamlet," an' you appear to have read them a',' said Euphie, smiling, but stretching out her hand for the book.

'An' is't no' my duty to see what you're readin'?' demanded Mrs. Lyn, nothing daunted. 'What I dinna like is Andrae Craig gi'en you a book like that. It's no' moral.'

'I can tak' the gude an' leave the ill, just as we dae wi' the Bible. Ye may as weel say'—

'Weel, weel, never mind what we may as weel say. Whaur did Andrae Craig get a book like that?'

'Tammas Mathers, the poet, ga'e him the book in a present.'

'Tammas Mathers? What was that ye ca'ed him? A what?'

'A poet.'

'Lordsake! A fisherman, an' a braw ill-aff ane at that. Gaed by the door there, wi' his muckle sea-boots on, an' a net on his shouther, no' half an oor syne—ca' *that* a poet?'

'Indeed, mither, he's a' that. Look, there's ane o' his poems.' Euphie took the volume

from her mother's hand, and, opening it, took out a slip cut from a local paper, and laid it before her.

'Noo, I maun awa' to the herrin';' and she carried the book up-stairs and placed it in her chest locker.

Mrs. Lyn was so astonished by the news that Thomas Mathers had written the verses she held in her hand, that she let Euphie go off to work without further parley.

'Me, I canna understand it,' she soliloquised. 'Yon ordinar' red-headed man! A puir fisher, gaun to the lines every day! I'm sure, wha did I ken better than Tammas an' a' his folk when my man was livin'? I never saw ony poetry aboot him. Humph! what's this he says?—

"Oh, these were hours—ay, gowden hours, in love's fantastic dream,
For hope had buskit fairer flowers than Nature e'er could claim;
Affection knit our hearts in one, as at her shrine we knelt,
For ours was love—ay, love as pure as mortals ever felt."

Noo, mercy me! hoo did Tammas Mathers ever learn to pit words thegither like that? He got nae mair schulin' than I did, an' never saw naething a' his days but bark-wuss an' bow-tows. It's no' like as if he was weel-aff an' had siller i' the bank, either. I canna mak' oot hoo a man withoot a bawbee can be a poet. A poet—an' him only a fisher!'

Mrs. Lyn read the whole poem, which was called 'A Response to Nature,' over and over again, but it gave her no clue to the mystery.

It was quite late when Euphie came home, tired and hungry, her cilskin petticoat shining with herring-scales. It had been a busy day in town; hundreds on hundreds of crans of herrings had been landed, the town was crowded with barrels piled high as the house-tops, and the streets were strewn with salt and odorous of herrings. Cadgers from all parts of the country were down with their carts and nags, anxious to get a bargain of plump herrings to hawk about the countryside. The girls at the curing stations sang as they worked. All day the town was resonant with the sound of hoofs and wheels; the sharp knocking of the coopers' hatchets as they headed up the barrels; the laughter and long whoop-like 'skirl' of the women as the jokes went bantering round, and the curing and packing of the herrings drove merrily on.

For it was a heartsome and jovial time when the heavy schools of fish swam down into the fine spawning grounds at the Haiks, to the east of Crail, or 'The Traith,' between the Bass and the May, out of which the fishermen had fished so much gold that it had come to be called California. A blithe and hopeful time, indeed; for at the back of all this business doing there was hope and good cheer, and many were the workers whose fingers were propelled by the nimble electricity of love, by the consciousness that they were earning the lining of a snug little nest of their own, and by visions of a gay wedding and a dance till daylight in the Town House, after the drave.

Euphie was tired, but happy. Her hands were sore, and smarted with the salt, but she

had earned five shillings. Moreover, on her return home she had met Andrew Craig, coming down the Wynd, with his sea-boots on, and a pile of nets on his shoulder, and he had smiled with his dark eyes as he passed, bringing all the blood in a rush to her face, bespattered as it was with scales and salt. Was there any girl in all Inweerie more blissfully happy this lovely Lammas evening as the boats put out to sea?

CHAPTER IV.

A BROKEN TRYST.

HOWEVER busy the week-days, there was always peace and rest in Inweerie on Sunday. The boats lay deserted in the harbour, and the Sabbatic stillness was broken only by the flowing and ebbing of the tides, and the shrill kling-klang of the church-bell ringing out the call to worship. As evening wore on, however, there was a little social relaxation. The old and married folk made quiet, friendly calls upon their relations; the children began to run about in the streets; and the young people of both sexes, in Sunday evening toilets, went sauntering up the long green country roads towards Balcaskie Woods, enjoying the soft twilights — the lingering golden twilights one sees only in this part of Scotland. Here, by the edge of a copse, Andrew Craig and Euphie, by tacit understanding, were accustomed to meet, and though never a word of love had passed between them, each felt somehow belonging to the other.

Andrew, looking very manly and winsome in his blue fisherman's suit and smart peaked cap, was on his way up there to keep the usual

tryst, when he encountered Mrs. Lyn, arrayed in her best black merino, black net mutch, grey shoulder shawl, and black Sunday apron, standing on the doorstep. She had observed Bob Syme pass up a few minutes ago, following Euphie.

'It's a fine e'enin',' she remarked amiably.

'Ay, a fine nicht,' returned Andrew, rather pleased.

'Are ye no' comin' in to sit doon a wee?' she said, with an inflection of voice which a spider might use to invite a fly.

Andrew hesitated.

'Thank ye, but I was just gaun up the brae for a walk.'

'Ye're weel-aff that can get oot,' she said, lifting her eyebrows. 'I never kens what it is to get a moothfu' o' fresh air. Folk wi' a way o' daein' like me has just a continwal wait-on.'

'Ay, it's confinin',' said Andrew, taking a step forward.

'Eh, what way was ye gaun, Andrae laddie? Was ye gaun up by Balcaskie, or alang by the Coalfarm?' she inquired sweetly.

The young man was taken aback. It wasn't in human nature to tell where he was going just then, that was his own sacred affair, so with an assumption of supreme indifference he answered—

'I'm nae ways particular. I'm thinkin' I'll go along by the Coalfarm.'

Up went Mrs. Lyn's palm in astonishment.

'Aweel, if that disna beat a'! Just providential! Here was me wussin' I could see somebody gaun that way, for I dinna like to be

stravaigin' my lane an' sae mony folk oot aboot. Just wait or I lock my door, an' I'll gang that length wi' ye;' and, to Andrew's consternation, she swiftly turned the key in the lock, and stepped along by his side.

To gain the goodwill of Euphie's mother he would have walked twenty times the length of the Coalfarm at any other time; but what would Euphie think? However, he was in for it now, and there was nothing but to go through the ordeal as quickly as possible, and then, ho, for Balcaskie Woods. He had told a fib when he said he was going by the Coalfarm, but he would take his punishment bravely.

Mrs. Lyn was a healthy, able-bodied woman as yet, but she walked extremely slow.

The smell of the whins just did her good, she said, and she stopped every few minutes to enjoy it. Then she met several acquaintances, whom she paused to chat to, always including Andrew in the conversation, so that he could not possibly walk on. Andrew tried to be patient, but his patience was too apparent.

'I think I'll go back now,' he said, when they reached the other side of the Coalfarm, and she still held on; 'but you can gang on. It's a fine nicht, an' the caller air 'll dae ye gude.'

'Maybe I'm hinderin' ye, Andrae? Maybe ye're wantin' to gang some ither gate?'

'Me? Oh no; I'm gaun straucht hame,' he protested.

'Oh, weel, then I'll just turn an' gang back wi' ye,' said his companion, with great satisfaction.

Andrew's heart died within him. Euphie

would be up the road to the old chapel near Balcaskie, waiting and wondering what kept him. He conjured up her image, with the dark blue dress and tidy little shawl setting off her fair complexion and yellow hair, her shining dark eyes looking shyly into his.

He had already told two fibs; should he tell another, and say he had an engagement? Impossible! Hadn't he just said he was going straight home?

But oh, if Mrs. Lyn would only walk faster, and be less observant of what she saw; if he could only hurry home, so that, having rid himself of her, he could fly with winged feet to where Euphie now strolled, or sat plucking spores of grass under the hedge that skirted the copse. But Mrs. Lyn was not to be hurried.

'Losh me, Andrae,' she panted, 'ye forget that you're young an' I'm auld. What's a' your hurry, min? Tak' time; it's a bonnie nicht, an' the air's fine an' caller.'

Andrew slackened his pace, but his pulses began to beat madly, and he was wicked enough to wish his companion at the bottom of the sea.

'No, as you say, there's nae hurry,' he assented, and resigned himself to his bitter fate.

'Eh,' she said, pausing and turning round, 'isn't that a bonnie sicht to see a' thae stooks upon the fields up yonder by Waterless?'

'Very bonnie,' responded Andrew, and had not his back been turned to the sunset one would have thought it was its ruddy reflection which crimsoned his face as he spoke.

'An' did ye ever notice,' she continued, waving her right arm up toward the north,—'did ye ever

notice hoo yon bonnie yellow licht brundes awa' ayont the back o' Kelly Law 'oors after the sun's doon? Hoo's that, Andrae?'

'I dinna ken. It's the reflection, I fancy,' said Andrew, moving on a step or two ahead.

'Bide a wee, Andrae. What's a' your hurry, min? Ye see, a' this is just sic a treat to me, seein' I'm sae little oot. Look, see, up by the Taft Hill yonder, there's twa fields o' neeps.'

Yes, Andrew saw the fields, and in his soul wished both she and they were with the yellow light at the back of Kelly Law.

'Weel, noo, what gars the shaws o' thae Swedish neeps hae sic a blae kin' o' colour, sae different frae the white neeps?'

'I dinna ken; it's the nature o' them, I fancy,' said Andrew desperately.

Mrs. Lyn could find no other pretext for delaying, so she stepped along brisk enough for a time. He felt his hopes and his spirits rising as they moved forward.

'That was an unco book ye lent Euphie—that what d'ye ca' 'im?'

'Shakespeare,' said Andrew eagerly. 'Did ye like it? Did Euphie like it?'

'Weel, I canna say that play-actin' is in my line. A gude volume o' sermons is mair to my way o' thinkin'. But it's very gude an' very freendly o' ye. I was just sayin' to Bob that he maun gie ye a biddin'.'

'Bob?—a biddin'? What is't ye're speakin' aboot, Mrs. Lyn?'

'Weel, maybe I shouldna let the cat oot o' the pock just yet; for, ye see, Euphie likes to get her fling wi' you an' the ither lads as lang as she can.

But, as I tell her, it's no' richt to be leadin' on a young chap when she kens there'll be nae mair o't. But for gudesake say naething to naebody just yet. Bob, ye ken, michtna like me speakin'.'

Mrs. Lyn shot a furtive glance at the young man, and saw that the shaft had struck home.

'Ay, is that the way o't?' he said quietly.

''Deed, ay, Andrae. Ye ken it's the road we a' maun gang. I'm real weel-pleased to think she'll hae sic a gude doonsittin', for she never was brocht up to fisher-wark, ye see. Bob Syme 'll be able to keep her full an' plenty.'

Andrew's face had grown white, and his eyes glittered like steel.

'If Euphie would tak' up wi' a fellow like that, or hae onything to say to him, she's no' what I tak' her for,' he said, feeling a sudden difficulty in speaking, a sort of hoarseness.

'What have ye again' the chap, Andrae Craig?' demanded Mrs. Lyn, stiffening.

'What I hae again' him is no' for a woman body to hear,' replied Andrew sternly.

'Humph!' snorted Mrs. Lyn.

'An' I think ye've made some mistak',' added Andrew, with emphasis; and, careless now whether she saw him or not, he left her without ceremony, and struck into a path leading to the copse where Euphie generally waited. His brain was on fire. He would not, could not, believe that Euphie had only been making fun of him all the time, while intending to marry Bob Syme. Anyhow, he would see. Perhaps he had been too backward in never speaking out what had been in his mind ever since he was a boy at school. He had never mustered courage to say

in so many words that he loved her, that she was all the world to him, and that as soon as he had a comfortable home to offer her he wanted her for his wife. No. But surely—surely she knew, she *must* have known, that it was for this he sought her out every Sunday evening, walking and talking with her only, and feeling all the time in a blissful day-dream. No, he could not believe it. A hundred looks—swift flashes charged with subtle feeling; a hundred tender tones that he remembered in their long walks together, when they spoke of everything but the one thing uppermost in both their minds—assured him otherwise. No, no, no!

But Euphie was not at the trysting-place. There were other happy pairs there, some to whose weddings he had already been invited; and each couple sat a little apart from the others among the sweet clovered grass under the hedges, talking in low tones, with their feet among the rank wildflowers growing out of the dry ditch.

He bit his under lip at the corner, and tried to look unconcerned as he wandered up and down, but there was a new look of trouble in his eyes which he could not hide. He noticed his acquaintances nudging each other as he approached, and he nodded in a quick, friendly way and passed on.

'Lookin' for your lass?' inquired an outspoken but quick-witted youngster, who had intuitively divined Andrew's anxious survey of the road.

At any other time he would have resented the boy's impudence, but at this moment he was too troubled to be scrupulous. Besides, this was the

son of a near neighbour, whom he knew intimately, so he immediately answered—

'Ay. Where is she, d'ye ken?'

'I saw her sittin' doon there wi' Bob Syme a lang time. I think they gaed up to Greendykes thegither.'

Andrew passed the boy hastily, lest he should observe the feeling he knew he was showing in his face.

Away up to Greendykes with Bob Syme! A sudden faintness came over him for a moment, a quick rush of blood to his head, and a loud singing in his ears. Then it passed off, and left him quiet and cold—so quiet that he wondered at himself, while a chill, hard anger took possession of him. Not anger at Bob Syme; no, he would be just, even in the intensity of this terrible pain. Why should not Bob ask her, if he could get her? His anger, his pride, roused by the thought of her making a fool of him all this time, was up in arms against *her*.

He forgave her mother then and there. No doubt she had the best of motives for warning him, though she was a woman whom he did not like. He turned at once to go back by the way he came. But no, he could not. His acquaintances would see his face as he passed, and might pity him; they all had seen how he had been jilted. She had been sitting there under the hedge where he had so often sat with her, the happiest man on earth, and she had before them all gone off to Greendykes with that fellow. Bah! he would go to Greendykes himself. He wished he could only get some girl to go with him, just to show how little he cared.

'Ah—hillo—Mary!' he cried, as, walking rapidly, he encountered a modest little girl, with a shining black head and eyes, and a pair of long rings dangling in her ears—a girl who lived a few doors from him.

'Come on up to Greendykes, an' I'll gie ye curds an' cream,' he said, with a sudden wild impulse.

'Eh, Andrae, g'wa!' said the girl archly. 'Whaur's Euphie Lyn?'

'Oh, she's up there gettin' treated too, I fancy. Never mind her, Mary. Come you up wi' me.'

Mary, after some slight demur, consented, for Andrew was a lad any girl might be proud to walk with—a lad without reproach; and she began to think it was not true about him and Euphie.

There were many couples in the big kitchen of the farmhouse this Sunday evening; and the lads had treated the lasses to curds much as the fashionable young gentlemen of the present day treat their young lady friends to ice-creams and lemonade. Andrew and his friend Mary were treated to theirs in a soup-plate, with a horn-spoon for each to sup with. The curds were excellent, the cream delicious, but Andrew only made a feint of eating. For there, at the far end of the stone-paved kitchen, with their backs toward them, sat Bob Syme and Euphie, talking and laughing as if there was no such person as Andrew Craig in the world.

The chill pain which had struck him through grew sharper; and, as they made a movement to rise, Andrew, possessed by the demon of jealousy, threw his arm along the back of his companion's

chair, and looked into her smiling face with well-feigned admiration.

This tableau, improvised for her special benefit, Euphie saw as she turned to walk out with Bob Syme. There was a certain luxury in the self-torture which Andrew thus inflicted upon himself, but he missed the start, the muffled exclamation which escaped Euphie, as, with every vestige of colour faded from her face, she grasped the back of the chair for a moment before stepping out.

And it had all come about so simply. She had wandered up to the old trysting-place, but was scarcely seated on the grass when Bob Syme, spruce and dandified, and with a flower in his buttonhole, came up, and without ceremony sat down beside her. Bob, young as he was, had had two or three love-affairs already, but he seemed to have lost his head altogether over Euphie Lyn. He came regularly up to her mother's house two or three evenings a week, but getting no encouragement, he followed her every Sunday evening up the brae, only to find her monopolised by Andrew Craig. Now, however, he had got a chance, and he determined to make the most of it. Euphie frowned when he sat down; but there were others near by, and she did not care to be uncivil and make a scene. Bob could chat well; he began to relate something which interested her, and she relaxed a little—never failing, however, to glance down the road for Andrew's appearance. But no Andrew came. The time wore on, and the sun went completely down, leaving a great yellow glow in the west, but still no sign of her tardy lover.

Some couples rose and went away, others came and went, but still he came not. She began to get hot and restless, and rose up and shook out her dress, so that she could see farther down the road.

'Come awa' up to Greendykes, Euphie,' said Bob.

Euphie glanced down the road, and answered—

'No; I think not.'

She walked up and down the path, hoping Bob would get tired and go away; but Bob had no such intention.

'Od, we micht as weel go up; we'll no' be lang,' pleaded Bob; and Euphie, looking down the road with rising resentment, hesitated. Perhaps if she did go up with Bob it would be better than standing or strolling here, where every one was noting Bob's manifest attentions. She stole another long look down the road, and then, suppressing a sigh, she said, 'I'll gang, but I maunna stay lang.'

She had gone hoping Andrew would be down by the time she came back, when she could tell him how it all happened. And to think he had played her such a trick as this! To think, while she had waited and waited till in decency she could wait no longer, he had been walking and talking with Mary Scott instead of keeping tryst with her!

CHAPTER V.

AN OLD-FASHIONED PENNY WEDDING.

THE drave was over, the streets cleared, and the barrels carted away, and now the weddings were coming off ding-dong. The chief baker in the town, if he was making money, was also losing flesh, working late and rising up early, making great farls of shortbread, currant loaves, mammoth pies of choice beef-steak,—cut where beefsteak never grew, so the drunken little butcher whispered to a friend in maudlin confidence,—besides roasts, and large dishes of mashed potatoes, which also had to be browned in the baker's oven. All this was served on a vast table spread in the Town Hall, or the 'Toon Hoose,' which stood in the middle of the Broad Wynd, being the only edifice in the town capable of seating from thirty to fifty couples. For in these days they were all penny weddings, where each guest paid a shilling, and provided a fiddler or two for the dance in the evening.

Jenny Buwhannan's wedding had been talked about for the last fortnight incessantly. It was whispered that the young couple had six black birch chairs and a table, but subsequent informa-

tion was obtained to the effect that there were also an eight-day clock and a mahogany chest of drawers. It was also well known that she had been gathering pigs (*i.e.* dishes) for a long time past; and Jamie Scott, the bridegroom, had brought a set of china from Wick, with '*A Present from Wick*' written in gold letters around every one of the teacups, and '*Be cannie wi' the Sugar,*' and '*Be sparin' o' the Cream,*' inscribed on the sugar-bowl and cream-jug. This china had been shown to one or two privileged persons only, and as they had been solemnly sworn to secrecy, and never mentioned china to a living soul, it was an unfathomable mystery how the public ever came to know of it.

And for a whole week there had been two women at the 'washin'-pat' at the burn, washing, bleaching, synding, and drying the bride's linen providing, which, when spread out, covered a whole side of the burn-park—a fine undulating washing-green, used from time immemorial by the people of Inweerie as a bleaching-ground, but long since appropriated by a thrifty farmer, who found the fishers of Inweerie less tenacious of their rights than Ahab found Naboth the Jezreelite.

For the people were only fishers, without money to go to law with, and consequently at the mercy of more than one spoiler; so the potatoes grow in goodly rows and the corn waves fair in the place where the old bleaching-green is tilled—just as though the Eighth Commandment had been cancelled by the removal of the ancient landmarks.

When the bridegroom and best man went

around to invite the guests, according to custom, Mrs. Lyn received them very affably. Euphie was out, but she would certainly come to Jenny's wedding, that was a matter of course.

'An' nae doot ilka ane 'll hae their richt pairtners bidden?' she added, with suave curiosity. 'For, ye ken, when ye bid the wrang lad for the wrang lass it mak's jealousy, an' jealousy's no' easy amon' young folk.'

'Oh, but we took gude care o' that,' said the best man cheerfully.

'That's richt. Then ye've bidden Bob Syme for Euphie?'

'Bob Syme?' exclaimed the best man, looking at his companion in astonishment.

'We bade Andrae Craig for Euphie,' said the bridegroom.

'Aweel, ye're wrang,' said Mrs. Lyn decisively. 'Ye ken it'll hae to be Bob.'

When the two departed, they went straight back to Mrs. Buwhannan's to consult about the mistake they had made.

'If we bid Bob Syme we'll hae to get anither pairtner for Andrae Craig,' said the bride's mother practically. 'It'll just be ae couple mair, ye ken, an' the mair the merrier.'

'I saw Mary Scott up at Greendykes ae Sabbath nicht wi' Andrae,' suggested the bride herself.

'That beats a',' mused the best man aloud. 'I aye thocht Andrae Craig an' Euphie were thrang.'

'The swine's maybe ran through't,' suggested the bridegroom, putting his finger on a nail in the partition.

The best man hastily clapped his thumb on a pair of scissors that lay upon the table, and Jenny and her mother breathed, 'Cauld iron!'

'Weel, just bid Mary Scott. She's a fine decent lassie, an' if they want to swap pairtners after they're a' there, let them dae't,' spoke up a neighbour who had dropped in and heard the conference.

'Ay, 'deed, ay,' was the response in chorus; and the two again departed on their tour of invitation.

Since that Sunday evening, four weeks ago, a visible change, both in appearance and behaviour, had come over Euphie Lyn. From being a sweet-tempered, sensible girl, with a wholesome love of fun in her, she had suddenly developed a sharp, cynical tongue, a reckless, care-naught manner, and a free-and-easy way of running off to Pittenweem or Elie or anywhere else without a note of warning. She had come home from Greendykes that Sunday night laughing and talking to Bob Syme in a way to cause comment; and ever since, when she had happened to meet Andrew in the street, she had made it a point to utter a loud and laughing remark to some one over the way, to show him how little she cared, while Andrew passed on in grim silence. One day, however, as she went dashing down through the Cribs, a narrow passage of some two feet wide between two gables, she gasped and stopped short, for there stood Andrew Craig, pressing his back hard against the wall, so as to let her pass. The path was so narrow, the walls so inflexible, she had to touch him, and his breath flushed her cheek as she pushed by; but she pressed

forward, with her head swimming strangely, until she reached the end of the close, when she leant against the wall, with her hand to her side, panting hard. Then she heard his footsteps coming after her, and she fled, all her pride taking fire.

That evening Bob Syme, when he came up, did not see her—she was in bed up-stairs. 'No' very weel,' explained Mrs. Lyn.

But when he came again, Euphie was there, laughing and gibing as unmercifully as ever; and while she laughed she did not spare Bob's egotism and vanity. She was merrier than usual, indeed; but even he could not fail to see how thin she had grown, how dark were the shadows under her eyes, how hard and sharp and white had grown her sweet, firm mouth.

'Ye're lookin' awfu' thin, Euphie,' he said to her, as they sat on opposite sides of the hearth.

Euphie, who had lapsed into one of these fits of abstraction she was subject to, started and looked up wearily.

'Were you speakin' to me?' she said, in a daze.

'I was sayin' ye're awfu' thin,' repeated Bob.

'Is that a'?' she said, rousing herself and taking up her knitting. 'Ye micht tell a body something they dinna ken for a change.'

'It's no' much ye dinna ken, Euphie,' said Bob gallantly. Nothing she could say could give him offence.

'There's ae thing I dinna ken, but maybe you could tell me.'

'What is't?' said Bob.

'I dinna ken what ye come here for every ither nicht.'

'D'ye no'? What's the use o' speakin' that wey when ye ken perfectly weel it's for yersel'?'

'Aweel, Bob, ye needna fash,' snapped Euphie.

'I cam' up the nicht to see aboot us twa gaun to Jenny Buwhannan's waddin',' pursued Bob, undaunted.

'I never was bidden.'

'Ay, ye was,' persisted Bob.

'Mither,' called Euphie, into the shop where Mrs. Lyn sat knitting, 'did onybody bid me to Jenny Buwhannan's waddin'?'

'Ay, eh ay! I forgot. Ay, the bridegroom and the best man was here the nicht afore last.'

'I tell't ye that,' said Bob triumphantly.

'D'ye ken wha's a' gaun?' inquired Euphie.

Bob ran over a list of names, all in couples; among others, Andrew Craig and Mary Scott.

'It's gaun to be a fine waddin', surely,' remarked Euphie in a quiet voice, as she picked up a loop she had dropped.

'Ay, splendid. They've gotten a fiddler frae Colinsburgh a' the way.'

'Aweel, then, I think I'll go an' hae a dance. That's to say, if ye'll mak' yersel' onyway decent for a pairtner,' quoth Euphie, still knitting.

'I'll hae on the finest suit o' claes i' the Toon Hoose that nicht. I'm no' hard up, like some o' them,' said Bob; and he stood up, and, with his hands in his trousers pockets, stiffened up his shoulders, Euphie regarding him with sarcastic surprise.

'Ay, surely ye ocht to be the best dressed,

onyway, an' your claes micht weel be paid for, seein' ye can mak' plenty withoot workin' for't. It's no' like as ye had to rise oot o' your warm bed at ony 'oor o' the nicht, an' gang oot in the cauld an' the dark an' face death an' danger to get the price o' a suit o' claes. It's easier to pour oot a gill o' whisky, an' haud oot your hand for the siller, than tossin' aboot on the sea a' nicht. Isn't it?'

Bob, thick-skinned though he was, felt the bite of her sarcasm, and winced.

'But look what we've to pay for leeshins!' he cried, with instinctive extenuation.

'Ay, 'deed, ay, look what ye've to pay for leeshins!' echoed Euphie, with a mocking emphasis that made Bob frown. He would have gone out and never come back again had he been the master of his own will at that moment; but her face, thin and sweet, in spite of all its mockery and undisguised contempt, held him as a magnet holds the needle it has drawn to it. He felt she was despising him, and he immediately resolved to let her see he was not afraid of going out to sea any more than—than that Andrew Craig.

'Maybe ye think I'm feared,' he said, 'but I wouldna be feared to gang to the sea wi' ony man.'

A derisive laugh, that had a hard sound in it, greeted this statement

'I think I see ye!'

If she had challenged him to go through fire he felt bold enough to do it just then; as it was, it inwardly strengthened the resolution to silence her doubts of his bravery. Meanwhile he moved off towards the door, saying, as he went—

'Aweel, ye'll gang to the waddin', onyway?'

'Oh yes, Bob, I'll go, an' dance a' nicht wi' ye,' said Euphie gaily; and Bob, feeling compensated, went out and shut the door behind him. Euphie closed her eyes, and leant her head wearily against the jamb.

In these degenerate, unromantic days, which tolerate this way of slipping off unobserved to be married at a distance to whomsoever you may choose, just as if it were nobody's business but your own when, why, or whom you marry, it must be difficult to imagine the intense interest which a forthcoming marriage aroused in the old town of Inweerie. On the wedding-day a fine flapping display of the flags of the red, white, and blue waved triumphantly in the harbour, announcing that Love was lord of all; the town flag was also unfurled, with its boat and its griffin and its motto of '*Mare vivimus.*' And the long wedding procession was an imposing sight as it moved off to the manse, a mile off, amid the hurrahs of the populace, the shouts of the children, and the hot, sharp firing of musketry above the bride's head. Marching gloriously up the Broad Wynd, two abreast, arrayed in broadcloth, their weatherbeaten, sunburnt faces glistening under tall silk hats—the women in Sunday gowns and white net mutches, with flowers and flying ties of white satin—the younger girls with flowers in their hair and ribbons, and all with yellow gloves on.

And after the old minister had tied the knot, and they had all been served with a tiny glass of ginger cordial and a morsel of currant loaf, what rare fun, what a delightful excitement, the

marching home again! with the new-made wife on her husband's arm, and the laughter and good-natured raillery running electrically up and down the whole procession, till the new-married couple halted before their own door, where a great farl of shortbread was broken over the bride's head and thrown out among the crowd to be scrambled for. Why, it was the birth of an era — a chronological basis—from which the interested parties, long decades afterwards, dated previous and subsequent events.

At the dinner in the Town House the best man and his aides cast their coats before tackling to the carving and serving duties; and the bride's father, perspiring and unaccustomed, mumbled a grace in a must-needs and apologetic manner, after which, feeling more like himself again, he hilariously urged all and sundry to 'fa' to' and 'ca' awa',' himself setting the example.

It so happened that Andrew's partner was seated next to Euphie, and many were the furtive glances cast in their direction to see how Euphie would take it. For somehow Euphie had always held her head up in the town, being as much respected as she was misunderstood, and it had been considered quite a downcome for Andrew Craig to take up with Mary Scott after being as good as engaged to Euphie Lyn. Not that there was anything wrong with Mary, —she was a decent, nice little girl,—but—there was no accounting for these things. Moreover, no one could get at the bottom of the quarrel, if quarrel there had been, for both parties kept their own counsel; and some had come to jalouse that Bob Syme's money and 'business' were at

the bottom of it. To their surprise, Euphie spoke to Mary Scott in a friendly way, and Mary was as surprised as she seemed pleased.

'But, gude bless me, Andrae man, ye're no' eatin' a bite!' exclaimed a hearty gudewife, as she passed up to refill some of the plates.

'Oh, he's livin' on love,' bantered another; 'it'll be his turn next.'

To escape such remarks, Andrew was fain to eat something; but the food choked him, and as soon as he possibly could with decency he rose from the table. As he did so, he caught a glance of Euphie, with a white rose in her hair and another at her throat, and with a vain pang he saw she was as white as the roses, and looking weary and listless. In an instant all his anger died out. Why should he keep up this cankering ill-will, which was eating his own heart out? If she preferred Bob Syme to him it could not be helped, but he could not go on hating her, trying to hate her, nourishing and cherishing hatred because of her duplicity. No, no! and she looking so white and woe-begone; he must speak to her, and learn to be friendly, as indeed all Christians should be. He took one step towards where she stood, looking absently at the merry crowd, but a hand was laid on his arm just then.

'Andrew min,' said a middle-aged woman in a white net mutch and blue dress, 'just gie's a lift wi' this basket, will ye?'

It was a clean herring basket, lined and covered with white towels, and it was filled with fragments of the feast, which she wished carried over the street after dark to the house of

a widow, whose husband had perished in a storm, leaving her with seven boys to provide for.

'We'll just carry't ben the hoose till after dark,' she explained; and Andrew, pushing her aside, took the basket in his own strong arms and carried it to the other room.

When he returned, Euphie was gone, and so was Bob Syme — gone home with others to change their dress for the evening's dance. Well, he would certainly speak to her when she came back—that white face troubled him.

But when the fiddler tuned up and the reel was set, lo! there was Euphie in a light print dress, with her cheeks crimson—more crimson than ever he had seen them all the time he had known her, and her eyes glowing like stars. The fiddler struck up the reel of Tullochgorum, and away she went, the most graceful dancer there, with Bob Syme for her partner. Two or three times during the country dances he found himself opposite her; but she looked everywhere but at him, and when he had to take hold of her hand to promenade it was icy cold. She danced with him once, but at the end of the reel she bowed, and sat down beside Bob Syme, and he did not ask her again.

'I'm gaun hame, Bob,' she said suddenly; 'but stay you here.'

'Nonsense, so sune? The bride's no' awa' yet.'

'I ken, but I'm—tired. Gude-nicht.' And she slipped from the room unobserved. She had not gone far, however, when she heard a footstep behind her, running.

'Mercy! you've forgotten your shawl,' cried Bob.

'Thank ye, Bob. Gude-nicht.'

'D'ye think I'm gaun to stay an' you no' there?' said Bob, with implied reproach.

'Stay or gang hame, it's a' ane to me,' she said in an apathetic tone. 'I don't want ye hame wi' me. I said I would gang to the waddin' an' dance wi' ye, an' I did it. What mair would ye hae?'

'Oh, Euphie,' pleaded Bob, trying to circle her waist with his long arm, 'whan's *oor* waddin' to be noo? I wish it was the morn.'

But Euphie, uttering a queer eldritch laugh, darted from his side and fled home, breathing fiercely to herself, as she ran—

'Never! never! never!'

Bob came back to the dance not much concerned. He had heard a great deal of worldly wisdom in his father's bar-room respecting the pretences and shams under which women veiled their real feelings; and Mrs. Lyn, too, had given him to understand that 'a' that was just women's ways.' So with a light heart he danced all night, in his generosity sending over to his own shop for some whisky to drink the bride's health in, after which the fun waxed fast and furious, the men thumped and 'hooched' and snapped their thumbs wildly, until Andrew said to Mary Scott, 'I think, Mary, it's time we were awa' hame. The sooner the women folk are oot o' this the better.' Mary was inclined to stay and see the fun out, but Andrew took her home.

CHAPTER VI.

THE POET'S ADVICE.

THOMAS MATHERS, the fisherman poet, was redding his great lines at the edge of a saw-pit at the entrance to the moor which was the town's commons. Thomas was a fair man, with reddish hair and sandy beard, a broad white brow above his weather-beaten features, and a pair of meditative, deep-set, blue-grey eyes.

Euphie came up and sat down on the log beside him, holding something under her apron.

'Eh, lassie, is that you?' he said in a fatherly kind of way.

'Yes, Tammas'— Here Euphie hesitated, and Thomas looked at her long and searchingly.

'What ails ye, Euphie, my doo? Ye're awfu' thin an' dune-like.'

'I'm weel enough,' said Euphie evasively. 'Here's a book, Tammas; it ance belanged to you. Will ye gie't back to the owner for me?'

Thomas took the book from her hand, and saw it was the Shakespeare he had given Andrew Craig.

'Why no' gie it back to himsel'?' he asked, with a keen look.

'Oh, he disna speak to me noo,' said Euphie in a don't-care tone.

'Nae wonder, Euphie. I never thocht you were the lassie to throw ower Andrae Craig for a man that's no' fit to tie his shoestrings.'

'I never threw him up, Tammas. If he tell't ye that, he kens different. It was him, rather, threw me up,—though really there was naething atween us,—an'—I for ane am no' carin'.'

She took hold of the marline, and began to stick the hooks round the rip as she spoke, Tammas gazing pitifully into her face.

'No, no,' he said, with mild and smiling sarcasm,—'no, no, my lass, you're no' carin', an' he's no' carin', an' ye'll gang by ither wi' your heads as high as though your hearts werena dreepin' bluid wi' every fitstep. An' you'll marry an' be miserable, an' he'll marry an' be miserable; but aye across the gulf that divides ye will soul cry to soul, an' empty airms stretch oot for what may never fill them. Ay, ay, lassie, it's an awfu' hunger the hunger o' the heart; for ye daurna let it be seen, an' it maunna be spoken o', an' wha can ye mak' your mane to?'

Euphie continued to stick up the hooks, and Thomas fell into a reverie, his eyes looking dreamily out over the sea from under the rim of his sou'-wester.

'Ay, it's a queer world this; an' we've gane aboot wi' steekit een an' stappit ears sae lang, we're feared to open them for fear the licht be na what we want it to be, an' we daurna open our ears for fear we hear the truth. Oh, lassie,' he said, turning suddenly to Euphie, with glistening eyes, 'you're young yet. Dinna let foolish pride

wreck your days on the very threshold o' life. Open your een an' see things as they are. What's the gude o' siller to ye if the faither o' your bairns is a cuif that ye despise in your heart?'

'I wish my mither heard ye,' said Euphie.

'Your mither?—your mither? Ay, puir young thing!'

Euphie dropped the marline and looked at Thomas in surprise.

'Young? My mither's as auld as you, Tammas. Yes, an' I ken I can trust ye, for ye have a kind heart, an' ye're a poet, an' I ken what ye think aboot love, for I've read a' your verses.'

'Eh, bless ye, lassie, ye'll inspire me to write mair if ye look at me like that,' said Thomas, pleased to think he had gratified one human heart, even the heart of a girl.

'Tammas,' said Euphie, with a break in her voice, 'I cam' up to speak to ye, just ance errand to speak to ye. I maun speak to somebody, or my heart 'll break, I think.'

'My lassie, my puir lassie,' said Thomas, laying a fatherly hand upon her shoulder, 'I ken withoot ye tellin' me. Your heart's breakin' for Andrae Craig, an' that auld, near-begaun sinner, Nannie Lyn, wants ye to marry that young whisky-cask. Am nae I richt?'

'Ye're richt, Tammas; but—I dinna like ye to speak that wey o' my mither. She has her ain way, but she's my mither, an' I maun respect her.'

Thomas laid his hand, red and rough, upon her yellow hair tenderly. 'Puir lassie! puir wee lassie! God help ye!'

'What should I dae, Tammas? What would ye advise me? My mither has set her heart on Bob Syme, an' she'll gie me nae peace. I dinna want to marry onybody. Andrae can tak' Mary Scott if he likes'—

'An' what then?' queried Thomas, with an amused smile.

'Aweel, Tammas, I can be an auld maid. What for no'? The best women I ken are auld maids; it's better than—than—Bob Syme.'

'Weel, that's a' richt—*be* an auld maid,' responded Thomas, his eyes twinkling with fun.

'But that's what my mither wunna let me be. I've pleaded an' prayed, ay, an' grat, but her mind's made up; an' she said, nae farther gane than last nicht, that she was to get him put in the cries the Sabbath after next, so I couldna draw back. Tammas, Tammas!' whispered Euphie, laying both hands upon his sleeve, 'if ye hear I've run awa' some mornin', will ye gang wast to Andrae, an' tell him I've gane nae ill gate? Tell him I'll never dae nae ill—never, never to think that.'

Thomas seemed not to hear Euphie. He appeared to be weighing some question in his mind, and presently he thought aloud, as was his fashion at times.

'So she's made up her mind, has she? The cauld-hearted, cruel limmer!—just siller, siller! get siller! An' so, to get it, she would sell the bairn, soul an' body! No' content wi' what she brocht her at first, she maun mak' mair aff her. An' the puir bairn tryin' to respect an' obey her in the belief— Euphie,' he said, turning to

her sternly, 'don't you daur do what Nannie Lyn bids ye.'

'Tammas! my mither!' exclaimed Euphie, in horror.

'Mither?' said Thomas, with stern contempt. 'Mither? She never had a mither's milk in her! Lassie,' he continued, stooping so that he could look straight into her eyes, while his fingers clutched her shoulder, 'hae ye wisdom? Hae ye sense to hear an' keep to yoursel' what ye hear? Can ye keep the secret o' the dead—a secret I would never reveal if it wasna to save ye frae throwin' yersel' awa' through a sense o' filial duty?'

'What d'ye mean, Tammas?' breathed Euphie, half afraid of Thomas's intense earnestness.

'Will ye say "No" the next time Bob Syme's marriage with you is mentioned?' he demanded.

'I've said "No" ower an' ower again, but it's nae use. My mither's hard, hard, Tammas; God forgi'e me for sayin't.'

'*Your* mither, my lassie, was the bonniest young thing the sun ever shone on, I've been tell't; but she's dead this seventeen year,' said Thomas, with a sigh.

'My mither? Tammas, what are ye sayin'?'

'What I never thocht I would hae to say—the truth. Nannie Lyn got a thoosand pound when she took you an' promised to bring ye up, an' she's aye passed ye aff as her ain. Nannie Lyn was a servant to your mither ance—that's a' I can tell ye the noo.'

Euphie sat staring at Thomas, her eyes full of interrogation and astonishment. She was trying

to grasp the fact that Mrs. Lyn was not her mother, and now a hundred little things rose up to confirm it. She remembered how, as a child, she had never slept with her as other little girls did with their mothers; she remembered none of that fondling and petting which is such an outlet for love between mother and child; she remembered the ceaseless, unappeased craving for love which had devoured her as a girl—a love which had wound itself about Andrew Craig with the consciousness of being loved by him.

Suddenly she burst into tears, passionate tears. If Mrs. Lyn was not her mother, she was alone in this world, and had nobody, nobody who cared whether she lived or died.

Tammas mutely resumed the redding of his line, knowing this was not the time for any word of his.

By and by she dried her eyes and looked up.

'Tammas,' she said, 'I maun be a wicked sinner; for, if onything, I'm rather glad, though it's a kind o' lonesome. Oh, I kent a' the time there was something wrang, but I aye thocht it was my ain wicked disposition. I aye tried to be fond o' my mither (I canna help ca'in' her mither yet), but I couldna, she was sae cauld an' hard an' worldly. But oh, my mither! my bonnie young mither! Oh, Tammas, was she like me?'

'Ay, very like—the same bonnie yellow hair, but I believe she had blue een. Ye maun hae your faither's een, lassie.'

'Tell me aboot him, Tammas,' she pleaded; but Tammas shook his head.

'No, my dear, ye maun be content. I tell't ye only because I saw ye were gaun to sacrifice yersel', an marry whaur your heart didna lead ye. Noo, when ye ken that you're no' behauden to Nannie Lyn, ye can daur her to force ye. But dinna betray me, if ye can help it. I dinna care for mysel', but Nannie has a siccar temper an' a cruel tongue when she likes, an' she wouldna think twice to mak' it het enough for my wife an' bairns. An' I'm no' a man o' strife, Euphie. A' I desire in this world is to earn an honest bite for the bairns, an' sing a bit sang noo an' then in my ain way. An' then I have my dreams, lassie, my ain dreams that nane but Ane kens aught aboot.'

'D'ye ken, Tammas, that Bob Syme gaed aff in Andrae Craig's boat this afternoon?' said Euphie. 'I ance said to him it was braver to sail the sea than to sell whisky, an' he said he would let me see he could gang aff in a boat as weel as ony man.'

'Humph!' said Thomas, lifting his lines up on his shoulder; 'he'll get a fine shakin'-up, then, for the wind's risin', and there was a lunar bow last night. The wind aye blaws through the bow, an' it'll be wast-nor'-wast, an' a stiff blaw at that. Ay, I'll gie Andrae the book,' he added.

They separated, and Euphie turned to go up among the whins to think over the new revelation she had received, when Thomas called after her, 'Hoy!'

'There's an auld sayin' o' John Knox's I want ye to think on when ye lie doon the nicht,' he said, as she came back to him, 'an' ye ken a

word in season hoo gude it is. I'm thinkin' John, although he aye let on to be sae siccar, kent geyan weel hoo it was himsel' when Love cam' into the business. He says: "They that marry where they affect not, will affect where they marry not." Tak' you the snell auld billie's warnin', Euphie lass.'

CHAPTER VII.

A NIGHT OF TERROR.

ALL afternoon great grey watery clouds had been massing in the north-west, and now loomed Alp on Alp menacingly. Long white shafts of light, escaping through the rifts, shot fan-like into the sea—a sure omen of ill weather; and evening, dark-browed and lowering, had closed in over a white and sickly sunset. The wind rose, afar off the sea growled ominously, and the tide swept in with long foam-crested rollers, that broke hissing against the pier. Women came out and looked up at the sky, and went indoors again with knitted brows and anxious eyes.

As the night deepened the gale increased, and what with the wailing of the wind and the hollow booing of it in the chimney, with the roar and din of the sea dashing darkly against the rocks, there was but little sleep in the town. Away out on the Forth the boats were tossing in the storm, and sickening dread kept the women awake. Some never went to bed at all, but, tying shawls about their heads, went into neighbours' houses to comfort and be comforted with sympathetic company.

'You, d'ye hear that? Is that a' wind?' said Willie Brown's wife, with wild and scared eyes. She had run across the road, with her sleeping baby wrapped in a blanket in her arms, to Jenny Buwhannan's, where an old woman had come already.

'Ay,' responded Jenny, putting on more coal, 'if it was only daylicht; but it's awfu' to be daudin' oot there i' the dark.'

She gave the big chair to the old woman, told Willie Brown's wife to put the baby down on the bed, and then she sat down on the corner of the fender, and they all waited for whatever God might send. Come life or come death, they could only wait.

By and by Euphie Lyn stepped in, with a shawl about her, and her yellow hair a-blown about her thin face.

'I couldna sleep, Jenny,' she apologised. 'I got up, and when I saw the licht in your window I cam' rinnin' ower, thinkin' ye would be oneasy aboot the boats.'

''Deed am I, Euphie. I couldna gang to my bed, an' I was glad when Meggie there an' her auntie cam' in. Sit doon. I'm glad ye tuk a thocht to come ower.'

'Eh, you, sic a nicht!' exclaimed another neighbour who now rushed in, closing the door nervously behind her. 'Me, I couldna bide i' the hoose. Euphie, you're weel-aff. You'll no' hae onybody oot on the sea to think aboot, like the like o' us.'

It was evident that this neighbour knew something of the town gossip; but Euphie answered evasively—

'It's hard for Jenny an' you, that have men at the sea in sic a nicht,' she sighed.

Jenny drew her little shawl tighter across her breast and gazed into the fire, while the wind bluffed and boohed and thundered in the chimney.

'D'ye hear the wind i' the lum?' said Willie Brown's wife Meggie. 'Mind ye, something'll come o' this gale. Sabbath nicht I dreamed I saw a coffin wantin' a lid, an' I waukened wi' the fricht o't.'

'Aweel, we're a' in God's hands,' said the old woman gently. 'It's no' the thing we expect that aye happens. The sea was like a lookin'-gless, an' the mune was hingin' ower the harbour-head, the bonniest sicht ever ye saw, no' a breath o' wind, an' the air sae mild an' warm, when my man gaed oot wi' the tide at twa o'clock ae bonnie simmer mornin'. I lay an' lookit ower the window till he was oot o' sicht. Ay, I've aye been glad I did it, for he was a gude man to me; but little did I ken that was the last I was to see o'm. Ay! eh ay! It'll be twenty year come the time.'

The old woman lapsed into silence, and they all gazed mutely into the fire.

After a little, Meggie Brown spoke again.

'Woman, there's things ye canna get oot o' your head. Nicht afore last, when Jean an' me was takin' a bite o' supper, there cam' three great raps on oor door—just like *that*,' and she reached over and rapped eerily on the press door with her knuckles. '"Me!" I says, "what's that?" an' I opened the door; but there was naething there. "Losh!" says I, "that's geyan

queer," an Jean she got feared, an' jamp intill her bed, an' I in after her. Mind ye, I hadna power to blaw oot the caunel ! Aweel, yesterday mornin' we just lauched at oorsel's for bein' sic fules. But last nicht I says to Jean, "Lassie, ye'll better rin oot an' get a loaf o' bread for the breakfast the morn's mornin'." Weel, she wasna weel oot when in she flew again, wi' a face as white's a cloot, an' bangs the door ahint her.

'"Mither," says she, "there's something i' the transe."

'"Lassie, g'wa," says I, "it'll be some o' the neebors comin' in, an' what'll they think, you daudin' the door i' their face like that?" An' wi' that, takin' nae thocht, I opens the door an' looks oot, an' there was something stannin' i' the transe. It wasna a man, an' it wasna a woman, but just like a human shadow, an' it stood, an' stood, an' stood. Me, I got feared, an' I cries oot, "Wha's that?" but it never spoke nor moved, an' I ran in an' lockit the door, an' I thocht I would faint. Jean she lichtit the caunel, though it wasna what ye would ca' dark, an' I gaed ower to draw doon the window-screen. Aweel, as sure as I've God to meet wi', there it was, richt afore the hoose, stannin', an' stannin', an' stannin' !

'Me, I canna get it oot o' my head, an' I wuss oor Willie was in. I didna want him to gang aff the nicht, but he says to me, "Meggie woman, d'ye no' ken we're a' i' the Lord's hands, an' honest folk maun fend for their ain?"'

Jenny Buwhannan shivered and covered her eyes with her hand; and Euphie slipped down

on the stool beside her, and laid a hand on her shoulder in sympathy.

'Dinna be feared, Jenny; the boats will a' be in by daylicht,' she said, comforting her own heart with the same hope, for Andrew Craig and Jamie Scott went both in one boat.

'Ay, but if onything should happen to Jamie Scott, I couldna thole it, Euphie,' said the young wife, with a moan.

'Folk maun thole a hantle in this world, Jenny lass,' said the old woman; and Meggie sighed.

'Ay, eh ay, auntie; you've come through't a', an' ken hoo it is.'

A wild blast struck the house and made it tremble, and the women looked at each other. Behind the pale and shivering group the candle had burned down unobserved, and the flame was clinging with a sickly light to the long unsnuffed wick.

'Jenny, look at your caunel!' exclaimed the neighbour who had come in last. 'That's a windin'-sheet! Eh, God help the boats this nicht! Just hear that wind hoo it shakes the door, for a' I lockit it when I cam' in! What—what's that?' she whispered, shrinking close to the fireplace as a chill gust blew in under the door, and a heavy tramp of sea-boots sounded in the passage.

'It's Jamie—it's Jamie Scott!' shrieked the young wife, and, starting up, wild with joy, she opened the door and threw it wide. A chill air filled the room, but no one appeared.

'I lockit the door when I cam' in,' gasped the neighbour, with blue lips.

Euphie, thinking Jamie Scott was playing some trick upon them, took the candle, snuffed it, and went down the long passage, the draught blowing the flame blue as she went. There was no one! Nothing there except the white walls on each side of her, and the door was locked on the inside! She re-entered the room, her eyes wide with a nameless fear, and with a sudden thrill of terror she banged the door and turned the key in the lock. They were all standing mute and awe-struck looking into each other's faces, while the blast shook the window-sashes and rain rattled on the panes.

'Ye needna fash lockin' the door, Euphie,' said the elder woman, with a strange calm; 'the lock was never made that would keep oot the like o' that. That was the fitfa' o' nae livin' man.'

The young wife sat down, and burst into wild weeping and sobbing.

'Ay,' pursued the old woman, 'they're weel-aff that can earn their bread upon the land. Puir fisher folk hae to fecht wi' what they've nae command o'—coorse weather an' roarin' seas—a' to get an honest livin'. Folk little ken what fish costs sometimes.'

The tension of their feelings was such that for a full hour they sat, dumb with an undefined dread, each thinking of her own, when a sharp tap upon the window made them all start.

'Jenny, Jenny!' called a familiar voice at the window; and Euphie, the only one who dared to move, went and lifted the blind. The candle shone upon the face of a man under a sou'-wester, ruddy and weather-beaten, but smiling, with fine white teeth showing pleasantly.

'It's Jamie Scott!' she exclaimed gladly, and ran to open the door.

'Bless me! what's adae?' he asked, looking at the houseful as he stepped into the room, wrapped in his oilskin coat, and with his sea-boots reaching to his loins.

'Me, Jamie! I've been frichtened oot o' my wits. I thocht ye was lost,' answered Jenny his wife, drying her eyes, and smiling wanly. 'D'ye ken, something cam' trampin' up through the transe a wee whilie syne, an' near took my breath awa'?'

'Havers!' said Jamie; 'ye're just nervish, you women folk.' And he seated himself and began to roll down the legs of his damp sea-boots.

'Na, Jamie,' said the woman with the infant in the shawl, 'nervishness disna gar a pair o' big sea-boots come trampin' up your transe through a lockit door. Didn't they?' she added, appealing to them all.

'They did that,' came the ready response.

Jamie pulled off both boots, and then looked meditatively at the little table in front of him, whereon his wife had just set bread and butter, and a teacup and saucer.

'Aweel,' he said reflectively, 'it *micht* be. There was twa men cam' as near losin' their lives the nicht as ever they'll be in this world. Bob Syme, ye see, tuk a notion to gang aff wi's this efternune. Aweel, just as we were on the ither side o' the May there was a high sea rinnin', an' the spray washin' clean ower the boat, an' as we cam' roond we had to tack. A' at ance I hears a great cry, an' this was Bob Syme owerbuird. It just dang me stupid, for it was dark,

an' if it hadna been for the May-licht glintin', we couldna seen oor finger afore us. But Andrae Craig—I never saw the like o't—he just grabbit a rope an' jamp owerbuird richt into that boilin' sea. I dinna ken hoo he ever got a haud o'm, but we heard him cry, "Haul! haul on the rope!" an' we hauled; an' there was Andrew hingin' on like grim death to the hair o' Bob's head wi' ae hand, an' the rope reeved ower his ither airm. The sea very near threw them a-buird, but '—

'God's mercy!' exclaimed the old woman; for Euphie had fallen back over the stool she sat upon in a dead faint.

When she came to, the women took her home; and Mrs. Lyn, somewhat grumpy at being wakened out of her sleep, was at first disposed to be angry. But her habitual policy prevailed, and she listened with amazement to the narrative of Bob's rescue.

'Ay, that's it, that's just it,' she said, with a long indraw of her breath and an elevation of her black eyebrows. 'Ye see, she's gaun to be marrit to Bob, an' hearin' he was sae near drooned just gaed till her heart. It was nateral. I'm sure, he's surely muckle obleeged to Andrae Craig, though nae doot he kent he would be weel paid for't when he did it.'

The morning broke calm and peaceful over the town, and there was only the low, sullen swell of the subsiding tide reverberating dully away to the eastward, and the great heaps of glistening brown wrack strewn high upon the sands to tell of last night's storm. All the boats were in but one, and messengers were off to

Anstruther and Elie and Crail and Largo to see if she had run in anywhere for refuge.

But while they waited for their return, the white-haired, frail old pastor came walking down slowly through the town, with a light not of this world upon his countenance, and every one darted to the doors to look where he was going. He had a letter in his hand, brought to him from Cellardyke some half an hour ago by the son of a skipper who had also been out in the storm last night, and he paused a moment before Willie Brown's door, and pressed his hand to his forehead before entering. The women who saw him left their doors, and assembled in grave, sympathetic groups, knowing only too well what this meant. The relatives, with trouble in their eyes and dire apprehension, ran forward and followed the minister in. The door was ajar, and he gently pushed it open and entered. The baby lay kicking in the cradle, with a little sister playing beside him, the house was clean and tidy, and the hearth white and cheerful, with a welcome for Willie Brown when he should come. Meggie was out at the back-door, and came in with her little four-year-old boy tucked under her arm.

'Now,' she said cheerfully, depositing him upon the floor; but when she saw them all standing, with the white-haired minister in their midst, she threw up her arms with a wild cry—

'Willie! O God, my Willie!'

A woman caught her in her arms, and her head dropped limp on the friendly shoulder as she slid down upon a chair.

'Let us pray!' said the minister, uncovering

his head; but poor Meggie, holding her head with both hands, whispered in gasps—

'Mak'—doon—my—bed—Jenny!'

While the minister prayed for the widow and the fatherless, Jenny Buwhannan turned down the blankets, and helped the stricken creature into bed. She turned her face to the wall with a moan that started the tears to the eyes of the women; but when the minister at length came over and laid his thin hand upon her shoulder, she waved him away with her hand.

'Let me alane! Oh, let me alane!'

'Poor thing! poor thing! Yes, the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith,' said the old man; and, wiping his eyes, he went outside with one of the relatives, and showed him the letter. The skipper who wrote it had seen the boat go down a little after midnight. He knew her, and had spoken her as they passed. When she had gone down he tacked to try to save some of the men, but nothing could be seen of them. Would the minister be so kind as to break the news to William Brown's widow? Ah yes! it was the old story; and there were six other houses of mourning that day in old Inweerie—for skipper and crew numbered seven.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BRAVE DEED.

A REGRETFUL hush brooded over the town while the fishermen left off fishing and tried to recover the bodies; but the sea kept all that was mortal of those who had gone down into its solemn depths. The people spoke with soft sympathy to each other when they met in the streets, and it was long before the shadow lifted. For it *was* a shadow, and sank into the memory as such,—not a death and a visible funeral, with the dead laid reverently under the sod in the quiet kirkyard west the town, but a remembrance of fine hearty men, leaving the harbour full of life and hope, and returning hither no more for ever; no more to the cheerful hearth, with the cradle on the warmest side—to the arch, off-hand welcome so thoroughly understood—to the kisses of the children—to the hearts sickening and breaking with vain and intolerable longing to look on their faces but once again.

The saving of Bob Syme was a brave and daring act, but Andrew Craig was a brave and daring man, albeit a quiet and shy one. His brow had flushed and his pleasant eyes had

hardened when he saw Bob come on board, for with unerring judgment he divined the bravado which had led him to select Jamie Scott's out of all the boats in the harbour.

'What on earth are you wantin' aff in a nicht like this?' demanded the oldest man in the boat, when well out at sea.

'Oh, just for the gude o' my health,' answered Bob flippantly. 'Here's something you'll no' refuse, Saunders,' and he drew from his overcoat pocket a bottle.

'No, atweel no,' replied Saunders. 'I never refuse a drink o' gude whusky when I get it for naething.'

''Deed, no,' said another of the crew. 'See a drap, Bob?'

Bob handed the man the bottle; but Andrew, who had been looking on with a frown, laid an iron grip on the man's wrist and took the bottle from him.

An oath broke from Bob Syme; but Andrew ignored him.

'What d'ye want wi' whisky?' he remonstrated. 'Tak' care ye dinna need a' your senses, an' mair, aboot ye the nicht.'

'Od, Andrae, it's no' costin' onything,' said the man good-naturedly.

'Cost! It may cost ye your life, if ye dinna look oot.'

'G'wa' wi' your teetotal notions, Andrae min. Rax me the bottle.'

Andrew answered by raising his arm and casting the bottle far out into the sea.

'What's that?' cried Jamie Scott, the skipper, coming aft to where they were grouped.

'It's a bottle o' whusky—gude whusky—he's thrown owerbuird,' answered Saunders indignantly.

'Whusky! Wha brocht whusky abuird?'

'Lord bless me! it was just Bob here, brocht it for a treat till's a'. There's nae ill in that.'

'Aweel, Saunders,' said the skipper, with a smile, 'it's safer whaur it is than in your stammack, my man.'

Andrew had gone down below, and the skipper lit his pipe and sat down at the helm, watching the leaden blue clouds moving up from the north.

'Thae teetotal capers are just turnin' the world upside doon,' growled Saunders, as he began to bait his greatline hooks. 'Perfect dowg i' the manger—neither drink yersel' nor let ony ither body drink.'

'Oh, weel, efter a', maybe we're better withoot it,' said the man whom Andrew had taken the bottle from; 'it's gettin' geyan black awa' to the north yonder.'

'Humph! wha cares for a bit hurricane? What I canna get ower is that godless waste o' gude whusky.'

'Oh, I ken what a' that's for,' said Bob, with smiling significance. 'He would just as sune fling me ower efter't, if he daured.'

Saunders stopped baiting his hooks and looked keenly at Bob's face, which was getting wonderfully white with the motion of the boat, and a remembrance of some bit of gossip recurred to him just then.

'Oh, ho, *that's* the way o't, eh? Aweel, mind ye, women's kittle cattle to deal wi'. If they

say ae thing, they aye mean anither. Better mind your weather-e'e an' pit your helm hard aport when ye spy ane o' *thae* craft bearin' doon on ye. When I was a young chap like you, I lost my bearin's, an' was ta'en in tow afore I kent whaur I was, an', by gosh, I've been in tow ever sin' syne.'

'An' a very gude thing it was for you, Saunders,' laughed Andrew, who had come up unobserved. 'Ye would been sunk lang-syne if it hadna been for your gude thrifty wife.'

'Oh, weel, I'm no' sayin' onything again' her,' protested Saunders. 'She'll pass.'

Bob Syme had crawled away over to the other end of the vessel, prostrate and overwhelmed with mortal sickness. He had not bargained for this when he proposed showing what a brave sailor he could be.

Saunders chuckled grimly as he watched him from under his sou'-wester.

'Gosh! I mind ae nicht comin' hame frae Pittenweem wi' his faither, an' he was that drunk he didna ken me, an' tuk me for some woman body, an' began palaverin' ye never heard the like. He tell't me hoo mony hunder pound he had i' the bank, an' hoo his wife was dead, an' he had ae son he was gaun to leave a' his siller till. I near split my sides lauchin' at him. But when he whuppit his airm roond my neck an' wantit a kiss, thinks I, by gosh, this is ca'en the joke to a heicht, an' says I, "Sim," says I, "ye've ta'en the wrang soo by the lug, my man," an' I tuk an' gae'm the best threshin' ever he got in his life. Weel, min, it sobered him up a wee, an' I towed him hame, an' next day when I tell't

him the way he carrit on he wouldna hardly believe me. Hoosomever, he ga'e me a gude dram ower the head o't. Oh, 'deed, I'll no' smo'er his bonour; he ga'e me a real gude dram.'

It was midnight before Bob again rose up to speak to them. The lines were shot, and the buoys and flags set, but the gale increased, so that they saw they would have to leave them and make for a haven. They were lowering the sail to tack when somehow Bob came staggering down the deck. With a great flap of the sail the vessel lurched, and Bob, with a terrific cry, disappeared over the side. One moment Andrew took to realise what had happened, then seizing a rope he whirled it dexterously about his arm and leaped into the boiling surf. By the gleam of the May-light he caught the flicker of a white face among the glistening blackness and the foam, and swimming toward it with immense difficulty, because of his heavy boots, laid hold upon the hair of the head and called to pull on the rope. A heavy sea almost washed them on board, and in a few minutes both were safe.

'By gosh!' roared Saunders, 'I thocht ye was awa' after that bottle o' whusky. Never mind, Andrae, my man,' he added, slapping Andrew's soaking shoulders, 'I tak' back a' I ever said aboot teetot'lers. Hoo was I to ken ye were a man o' that kind?'

Jamie Scott gripped Andrew's sleeve in the dark and shook him fiercely.

'Laddie!' he said in an awe-struck voice, 'that was an awfu'-like thing to dae. Ye put the very fear o' death on me.'

Andrew laughed shortly.

'What ither could I dae, Jamie?' he queried, and, turning, scrambled down below into the bunk.

Bob Syme was sitting on a kit, and holding on to one of the beds, while a couple of fishermen disrobed him. After they had rolled him into a bed, and covered him up, he still spat out sea-water. Between the intervals he remarked,—

'Ye'll no' catch me riskin' my life on the sea in a hurry again.'

'No!' responded Andrew, with a grim smile.

And while all this was taking place on board the 'Morning Star,' a mile or more to the eastward Willie Brown and all his crew went down in the darkness, and the heavy footfalls in the transe startled the watchers on shore.

Bob Syme was laid up for a fortnight, and for that time Euphie enjoyed a respite from his visits. But again a listlessness had seized upon her; she began to grow weary of everything. Only the strange statement which Thomas Mathers had made lent interest to her life. It took her days and weeks to realise it, but she was glad, glad that she was not the daughter of Nannie Lyn. And oh, to be worthy of the young mother whom Nannie Lyn had served, and been trusted by so implicitly!

Surely Nannie could not have been so hard and worldly in these days of her youth as she was now, so hard as to compel her to marry a man she detested. Euphie, however, kept sacred the knowledge which the poet had revealed to her. Mrs. Lyn's vindictive disposition was better known to her than to Thomas, who was but an outsider, and had seen less of her worst side than Euphie

There had grown a subtle, indefinable change in the girl's manner that Mrs. Lyn could not account for; she felt she had suddenly withdrawn from her influence; she became impressed with a conviction that her power over her was gone. Once or twice, when she had, as usual, been lamenting over Bob's heavy cold caught in the storm that night, Euphie had lifted up her eyes and looked at her strangely, making no answer.

'I think, Euphie,' she said one Sabbath afternoon, as both sat reading their Bibles, 'ye should really tak' a thocht o' joinin' the Kirk. Ye're auld eneuch noo, an' it saves trouble efter, ye ken.'

'What do you mean?' said Euphie.

'Oo, weel, ye ken, when folk's marrit, an' bairns to be christened, ye ken it's a' to be gane through wi' afore ye could get a bairn bapteezed.'

Euphie looked at her in mingled horror and amazement.

'Is it for *that* ye a' join the Kirk?' she cried.

''Deed, ay. Ye ken it's only the members o' the veesible Kirk can hae their bairns bapteezed.'

'It's *no'* for that *some* join the Kirk, I ken,' said Euphie, with a tender rush of memory that was pain to her now. No such thought had entered Andrew's head when he had of his own desire joined the Church. Had he not told her himself how long he had thought of it by land and sea, until, unknown to his own mother even, he had gone up to the white-haired old pastor, and been admitted as a communicant? Ah, well!

'I was thinkin' aboot it mysel',' she resumed, 'but for a different reason.'

'Oo, weel, it's naething to me what reason ye hae sae lang's ye gang. A' respectable folk that thinks onything o' theirsel's ava joins the Kirk. I've been a member this thirty year an' mair,' said Mrs. Lyn, with unction.

Euphie said nothing.

For some Sundays past there had been a great attendance of ploughmen and farm-labourers at church, for the 'preachin's' were coming on, and for decency's sake they tried to put in an appearance twice or so before the Sacrament Day came round. They came plodding up into the aisles, heavy-footed and shy, with a sort of apology in their gait, and some slight embarrassment in their kindly, sunburnt faces, with their hats awkwardly in their hands, and their Sunday black clothes sitting ill upon them.

They took their seats with hushed and modest demeanour, remembering the sanctity of the place and the day; while later, after the church was well filled, 'the maister,' two or three of them, strutted in, straight-backed and stately, and sat down with gentlemanly ease in the square crimson-cushioned seats apportioned to 'the gentry,'—the Epistle of James being considered uninspired.

After a sermon by the pastor's assistant, it was announced that the minister would receive intending communicants at the manse every evening the following week.

On Monday evening Euphie was half way up the country road to the manse when she heard voices calling behind her.

It was Mary Scott and another girl running to catch up to her.

'Eh, Euphie, I'm that glad to see you gaun up. Ye ken you're sae clever, an' at the schule ye had aye sic a grand memory. D'ye ken, I've been tryin' to get thae requirin's an' forbiddin's into my head a' last week, an' noo Annie my sister, that gaed forrit last year, says the minister only spiers "adoption," an' "sanctification," an' "justification," an' "What is God?" at ye. Oh, weel, I ken "What is God?" a' richt; I canna be beat at *that;* but "effectual calling" just dings me doutit. Let's hear if I can say't, Euphie.' And Mary offered her Shorter Catechism to Euphie, and began to stammer and hesitate over the order of the sentences.

'Ye'll better learn it,' said Euphie quietly. 'What *way* are ye joinin' the Kirk, Mary?'

'Me, I dinna ken; only oor Ann gaed forrit last year, an' my mither says it's best to get it ower an' hae dune wi't. I'm nineteen noo, ye ken, an' it's a thing a' respectable folk does.'

'When I'm up this length I'll gang as far as the manse wi' ye, an' come doon the Balcaskie Road,' said Euphie, as if with sudden impulse.

'An' are ye no' gaun forrit wi' the rest o's?'

'No,' answered Euphie in a low voice.

When the girls entered the manse she passed on to the Balcaskie Road and turned eastward, her heart hot within her, and the tears surging to her eyes. She join the Church! she take the holy symbols into her hands with such hard, bitter thoughts in her heart! Never! God forgive her! but she had not dreamed it was in her to be so rebellious and wicked until she had seen

Mary rattling over 'What is God?' and thought of her as Andrew Craig's wife.

'Eh, lassie!' exclaimed Thomas Mathers, whom she met as she entered the town, 'I was just wussin' I could see ye.' Here Thomas fumbled in his blue sleeve waistcoat pockets and drew out a ticket.

'There's to be a grand social the nicht in the hall east the toon, an' I thocht I would bring ye a ticket. There's to be fine speeches an' singin', an' we're wantin' a fu' hoose. There's an auld freend o' your ain gaun to gie them twa-ree farewell words afore he leaves the toon.'

'A freend o' mine!' echoed Euphie, with a sudden perception. Whaur's he gaun?'

Tammas looked astonished, and asked wonderingly, 'Did ye no' ken?'

CHAPTER IX.

A GRAND OLD-WORLD SOIREE.

THE hall east the toon' was an old carpenter's shop, cleared out and fitted with forms and a desk by the owner, a man of strong religious convictions, and by him given up for the holding of meetings, religious or moral, or whatever tended to the public good.

Some time ago a few of the more spirited of the religious people, bewailing the ravages which drink made in the town, and feeling that it would be cowardice any longer to confine themselves to bewailing only, had formed the nucleus of a Temperance Society, which still flourishes under another name to this day. Wise men were they in their generation; for, discerning that human nature had a social and laughter-loving side as well as a more solemn one, they set themselves to getting up social entertainments, where the speeches, like the songs, were given in the vernacular, and though neither were classical in their expression, they were thoroughly understood and enjoyed, which was infinitely more to the purpose. Already it had become a formidable rival to the public-house,

whose owners and frequenters poured ridicule upon the whole movement. 'He was a poor weak creatur' (hic!) that couldna tak' a gude (hic!) creatur' o' God—an honest dram (hic!)—withoot gettin' fu' on't,' asserted the latter, as they reeled home o' nights.

This evening the hall was decorated with some flags and evergreens, for a neighbouring minister had promised to come, some of the members and speakers that evening being of the flock whereof he was appointed shepherd. The owner of the hall himself belonged to a different denomination, but for the sake of the cause he had buried the sectarian hatchet, and this, to a man of his convictions, meant a good deal.

There was tea in flagons, and toothsome buns in basketfuls, with a great clattering of cups and saucers audible amid the jokes and laughter; currant bread and cookies and shortbread, with apples and sweeties by way of second and third courses; and when all this was well over, and the perspiring stewards had retired, the audience were in capital trim for the feast of reason and the flow of soul which was to follow.

The minister was unanimously voted to the chair, and never in all his life, he declared, had he felt more flattered and honoured. Never in all his experience had he seen a brighter or more appreciative audience—(hear, hear!)—and he felt sure that with such soldiers in the ranks, and with such officers (here he turned to the platform whereon sat the heads of the Society), they would soon overcome the enemy which was overrunning and blighting this our fair land. They all knew that beautiful psalm—

> 'Behold how good a thing it is,
> And how becoming well,
> Together such as brethren are,
> In unity to dwell.'

'Let us all sing it!'

David Forsyth, the tailor, struck up the tune Eastgate, and they sang—how the Inweerie folk do sing, to be sure! The landlord of a licensed grocery near by heard the hearty music as he stood in his door, and observed loftily that he thought there was such a thing as carrying things too far. Certainly it did go far, that music; for it sounded in many lands beyond the sea long years afterwards, when memory, looking back, unsealed her magic phonograph.

Then the minister prayed for a blessing on the movement—prayed for all concerned with it, prayed for those who did not yet pray for themselves, and finally commended to God's keeping the young member of the Society who was about to leave them for a land beyond the sea. Then they all sat down in silence, and Euphie grew still and cold, dreading the time when Andrew Craig should rise to speak.

'Mr. Forsyth will now address the meeting,' said the minister, as he sat down; and David, who was the town's tailor, a man of slender physique but wide forehead, and eyes sparkling with shrewdness and humour, rose up and passed his hand two or three times caressingly over his beard, which was iron-grey.

'My freends,' he said, with a twinkle of drollery in his eye, 'this is an extraordinar' age we live in, this age of steam. We've steam-

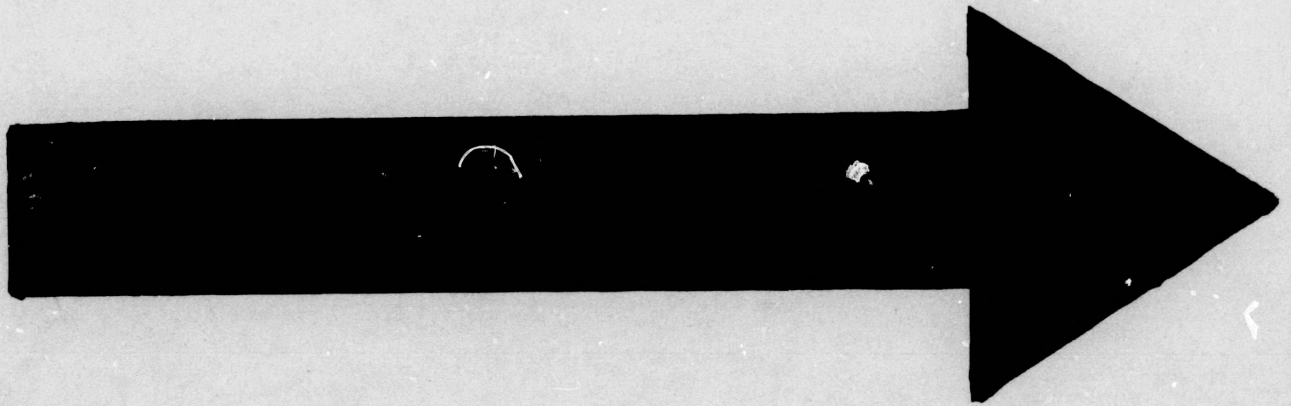
boats on the watter an' steam-engines on the land; we travel by steam, we spin and weave by steam, we print by steam; an' I wish to gudeness we could only get up a speech by steam. It's only aboot fower hoors sin' I got notice that there was to be a sor-ee in this hall an' I was expeckit to speak, an' if *you* ca' that fair hornie, I dinna. So I just tell ye forehand that I've begged, borrit, and stealt the speech I'm gaun to gie ye the nicht.' (Laughter and cheers.)

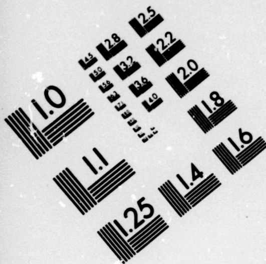
The speaker then cleverly sketched the origin and purposes of the Society, the success it had met with, and the good work it was doing. He referred to Andrew as a temperance thistle-seed about to blow over the Pacific and take root and flourish in the new land of Ophir; and then, pausing to assume a solemn expression of comic alarm, he continued: 'My freends, mind ye, this is gaun to be a bad business for the publics. I'm beginnin' to pity the puir wretches muckle as Burns pitied the de'il. I could point ye oot a score an' mair ower there amon' you young folk, that if ye hadna been here the nicht would hae been in a waur place, whuppin' ower your gless.' (Here, amid much laughter, he tipped the contents of an imaginary dram glass into his mouth.) 'Ay, ye may lauch! mony a ane I've ta'en in my day, an' like you I lauched. Oo, 'deed, ay, I lauched. But the Bible says there's a time to lauch an' a time to greet, an *my* time to greet cam' when I fand that the whusky that had been my servant had gotten to be my maister; ay, an' a hard maister at that. Nae maitter whaur I was, or what I was daein', when *it* said

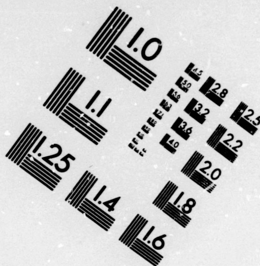
"Come," I had to come, an' when it said "Go," I had to go. The centurion in Scripter was naething to that centurion o' the deevil in my inside demaundin' me to supply him wi' whusky; ay, though there wasna a bite in the hoose an' the bairns needin' bread. For whusky, my freends, has an inveesible speerit, an infernal speerit, that enters into ye wi' the drink ye pour doon your throat, an' there he is, inside ye, aye cryin', "Give, give, give!" An' there's plenty o' ye ower there that kens what that awfu' cravin' is when ance it comes on a man, an' hoo hard it is to resist it. But it's twenty year an' mair sin' I got the upper hand o' the billie, an' noo I can snap my fingers at him. Noo, is there onybody here willin' to say, "Get thee behind me, Sautan"? Then, my man, just stap this way; tak' the pledge here an' noo, an' ye'll find oot that God never failed yet to help them that tried to help themselves. Hoo did I get rid o' the billie, d'ye spier?' (Here the speaker laid his hand on his stomach, bent over, and uplifted his forefinger with a sly smile.) 'Weel, I drooned him oot! I drank tea, I drank coffee, I drank plenty o' gude cauld watter, an' aye when he cried for whusky I ga'e him watter, till—till I drooned him as ye would droon a rotten. An' every drink o' watter I gae'm I plumpit a big NO intill't.'

The speaker sat down amid great applause, and then a song was announced, and a tall, reddish-haired girl, with a turn-up nose, sang 'The March o' the Cameron Men.'

At the close of the song the minister started up with a burst of enthusiasm.







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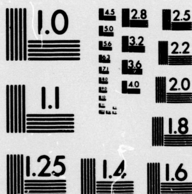

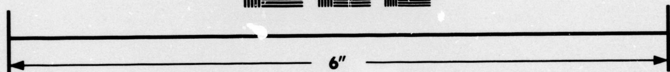

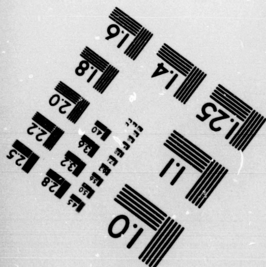

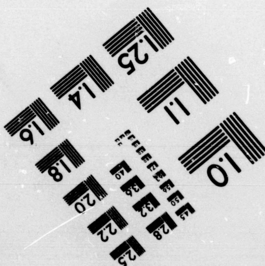

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'Yes, my friends, *that* is the spirit with which we must enter upon this campaign—

> "And proudly we'll follow our chiefs to the field,
> For a Cameron never can yield!"

What heart has not thrilled at the proud record of the Cameron Highlanders? In what land has not their slogan struck terror to the heart of the enemy? And shall not the slogan of temperance be heard all over this land—in the highways and byways, in the slums and closes which disgrace our civilisation? Let us be infused with the true Cameron spirit of the Church militant, and from this meeting go forth conquering and to conquer; and now we'll all sing, standing up, "Onward, Christian soldiers!"'

Another grand burst of singing followed, and then a friend, a piper from Elie, screwed up, and with flying ribbons and proper dignity blew 'Lochaber no more,' and afterward the reel of Tullochgorum, on his bagpipes, while the feet under the forms, with much thumping, and an occasional 'Hooch!' from the back seats, executed an invisible reel, pointing the time of the figure 8 to a nicety. The applause, after the piper sat down, was deafening.

Then a handsome elderly fisherman stood up, attired in a snug blue suit and red cravat, his pea jacket unbuttoned for air, and an expression of real enjoyment on his face. Evidently he was a favourite, for he had to wait a few moments for the cheering to subside. That the man was a born orator there could be no doubt; the fluency of his speech and the grace of his gestures surely

indicated him one of the great army of might-have-beens. But his schooling had been scant, and he could but express himself in such forms of speech as were familiar to him. His theme was warning against temptation of every kind, and after speaking very much to the purpose for some time, he implored them to be truth speakers, citing examples of the danger of deceit from Old Testament history.

'Ye've a' read in the Bible aboot the pairtricks — the three great pairtricks, Aubrahaum, Isaac, an' Jawcob—sic gude an' holy men they were. An' yet luk hoo they yielded to temptation! Luk what a nottorus sinner auld Aubrahaum turned oot, tellin' a deliberate, doonricht lee to the King o' Egypt, an' sayin' that Saurah was his sister when she was his lawfu' marrit wife. Ah, but he paid for that! An' luk at Jawcob, hoo his very mither learnt him to lee, an' deceive his auld blin' faither. My freends, that's mair than ony fisherman i' this toon would daur dae, it's no' nateral; an' when Rebekah eggit on her son to twa-facedness an deceit, she little kent she was makin' a character till hersel for future generations to point her moral an adorn her tale, as the poet says. For she was the wife o' a pairtrick, an' the mother o' a pairtrick, an' ocht to hae kent better, even though she *was* but a woman. I'm sure, my young freends, if oor succeeders could rise oot o' their graves wast the toon they would be prood '—

Here David Forsyth pulled the tail of the pea jacket, and said audibly, 'Are ye gaun to speak a' nicht? It's ten o'clock.'

'Oo, weel, then, I'll see an' wind up noo,

though I could speak twa 'oors yet,' said the speaker, with great good-nature.

'I havena the sma'est doot o' that,' retorted David, with dry humour.

'Say awa'! say awa'!' shouted the audience; and, thus encouraged, the auditor concluded—

'Ay, an' though it was twenty o'clock, I maun say thae twa things to the young folk here. First, avide a' kinds o' deceit; an' secondly, get eddication. Get eddication, I say, for a man withoot eddication's like the ploughman that ance cam' doon to the harbour here, an' when he saw the reef-points on the sails, says he, "Losh, sic pridefu' deevils thae fishers are! nae less than taissels on their sails!" *That's* the want o' eddication! Ye may as weel expeck a mason to build a hoose withoot tools, or a captain that canna box the compass to tak' a ship to Indy, as to get on withoot eddication. If I mysel' had only gotten eddication, instead o' bein' a puir fisher, takin' me a' my time to gar the twa ends meet, I micht hae been up, gude kens whaur—ay, maybe sittin' on the throne aside Queen Vic-tory!'

'Ay, ye'll dae noo!' audibly exclaimed the sarcastic David, as amid thunders of applause the speaker resumed his seat, and a group of young men with music-books in their hands stood up.

'Three Blind Mice,' the chairman next announced; and after this had been rendered and encored, Andrew Craig, flushed and embarrassed, came up to the desk.

He wasn't in the way of public speaking, but as a member of this Society he had been urged

to say a few farewell words before leaving for Australia. He liked his native town and country, but he had made up his mind to see the world, and had decided to go away next week, and he wanted to say to his co-workers here that he hoped they would carry on the good work begun; for many a wife and mother in this town had already blessed the day which had led their men folk to this hall instead of to the public-house. As he proceeded, the embarrassment wore off; he spoke easily and rapidly, feeling strung up to his highest tension, conscious only of one pair of eyes watching him, challenging himself to dare do other than quit himself like a man. But he was white when he left the platform and disappeared behind the seats, and Euphie sat, feeling her heart breaking within her. For he looked so handsome; she had never seen him looking so before, and he was so grave and manly withal, and his thinness, though it made him older-looking, rather improved him. He had dressed with studied care, not in his usual fisherman's garb; he had laid that aside now, and the tidy black suit set off his fine figure to perfection. His brown hair was brushed straight back from his white forehead, his clear eyes were grave and gentle, and his bronzed features had taken on a maturer, manlier look.

Euphie, while he stood up, looked at him steadily, purposely photographing him in her mind. She had not seen him for weeks, and this was the last look of him she would ever get. Oh, he had been cruel, cruel! After all these years of pleasant companionship, after the

long walks and talks on Sunday evenings for summers past, to turn all of a sudden and take up with Mary Scott! Mary, who had never opened a book, who hadn't an idea beyond shelling mussels or sanding a floor, a happy-go-lucky, decent girl, but—no wife—no wife for Andrew Craig. There were plenty other clever girls—girls who read and thought as well as worked, any one of whom could have been a companion to him—but Mary! Could it be he was going away because he had found that out? Her heart throbbed at the possibility. If she could only think that, she would write him a kind good-bye before he left, just to let him know that she wished him well, and for the sake of—auld lang-syne.

Mrs. Lyn scolded loudly for Euphie keeping such unbecoming hours, a girl on the eve of taking the Sacrament!

'I've changed my mind aboot that. I'm no' gaun,' said Euphie.

'No' gaun! Are ye daft?'

'Maybe I am, but I'm no' gaun,' was the quiet answer.

Mrs. Lyn's black brows lowered, and she turned furiously upon Euphie. But Euphie stood looking at her steadfastly, and something in her expression arrested the angry woman.

'Hoo daur ye glower at yer mither like that?' she said, with a perceptible weakening in her voice.

Euphie lit her candle, and without a word went up-stairs to bed. She had made up her mind to write a farewell note to Andrew in the morning.

CHAPTER X.

INTERCEPTED CORRESPONDENCE.

EUPHIE was up betimes next morning, for in truth she had not slept well. What should she say? how word that letter which would convey her good wishes and good-bye without betraying the love he had not cared to ask for? without in any way hinting how she felt his cruelty? She wrote note after note on the little table whereon stood the mirror, lifting up her eyes now and again to behold their own reflection looking at her with sad and wistful reproach—to behold a white, grieved face framed in a great mass of flaxen hair falling about her shoulders. But every note she tore up again; for the feeling, the longing, the reproach, she could not frame her sentences to hide. She took a sheet of paper and addressed it, and laid the little box of wafers ready to seal it when she should fold her letter in it, and then fancying she heard a foot on the stairs, she hastily thrust everything into the little table drawer, and proceeded to brush out her hair and coil it up on her head. She need not have hurried. Mrs. Lyn, down-stairs, was as fearful of being intruded on just then as Euphie herself, for she was at

that moment engaged in holding a letter, addressed to Miss Euphemia Lyn, over the boiling kettle-spout, in order to detach the wafer.

'Here's a letter to Euphie,' a youngster had said, as she undid the shop shutter at an early hour.

'Wha frae?' she demanded.

'Andrae Craig,' said the child; and, with her black brows knit, Mrs. Lyn took the letter, stepped to the foot of the stairs and listened. She could hear no movement. She slipped her shoes off on to the mat, and, noiseless as a cat, stole up to the door. Not a sound. Euphie must be sound asleep yet; her late hours were a providence this time. Then she came down as softly, and thrust under the kettle a greasy paper, which blazed and sent the steam curling damp out at the spout. About an hour after this, the door upstairs opened, and Euphie came down.

'Here's a letter a laddie brocht to ye this mornin',' said Mrs. Lyn coolly.

'A letter! Wha frae?'

'Hoo should I ken wha it's frae? I'm no' a witch to see through what's solid. Better open't.'

But Euphie knew that handwriting, and turned and went up-stairs again, opening the well-sealed wafer at the corner as she went. It was a narrow, long-shaped missive, with something firm inside, and as she unfolded it, a book-mark, her own little old book-mark, with the pale blue ribbon attached, fell upon the table. The book-mark she had given Andrew Craig when she was a little girl, with the words '*Remember me*' sewed in blue silk on the cardboard, returned to her without a word!

Not one little 'good-bye,' even, after all their seven years of courtship! For it *was* courtship. It was! it was! No matter how he might justify it to his own conscience, he knew, he *must* know, he had used her cruelly. She looked on the floor, and on the table, and down by the side of it, to see if no enclosed slip of paper, with *something*, even a little word, written on it, had not escaped and fluttered down as she opened it; but there was nothing—nothing!

Euphie had not been aware of the strength of the hope that had lingered in her until she saw the returned book-mark and realised it was all over, completely over. She turned the key in her door, and lay down prone upon the bed, and sobbed until a sharp pain in her left side compelled her to stop and sit up. Oh, the desolation of that hour! Orphaned, bereft, persecuted; surely God would look down on her and pity her?

'Are ye no' comin' doon to your breakfast, Euphie?' called Mrs. Lyn from below.

The call roused her, and her pride began to stir. What a mercy she had not written! Oh, if she had sent that kindly note she had torn up, and he feeling towards her like this, she would surely have died with mortification. It was the one sweet drop in her bitter cup that she had never by word or look expressed regret—that she had held her head highest and talked her merriest when her heart was at its sorest.

She folded the book-mark up in the paper which constituted the envelope, after the fashion of those days, and ran down-stairs, thrusting it into her bosom as she went.

She drank a cup of tea, tasting nothing else, and began to busy herself about the house, when her eye fell on a basket of half-dried clothes in the corner.

'Maybe I should spread thae things oot on the whins this fine mornin'?' she remarked.

Mrs. Lyn eyed the basket thoughtfully, and then answered, 'Aweel.'

Euphie hoisted the heavy basket on her side and proceeded to the moor, glad to get away from the inquisitive observance of Mrs. Lyn—glad to get up among the whins, where she could sigh and moan to her heart's relief without being observed.

As soon as she was safely up the brae, Mrs. Lyn ran up-stairs on a tour of discovery. She looked for Andrew's envelope everywhere, but could see nothing of it or its contents. As she searched, she came upon the sheet of paper which Euphie had addressed to Andrew, and also the little clam-shell full of wafers. Then a devil entered into the woman, for demoniac possession is by no means a thing of the past; or, if it be, how account for the devil-work done?

'The very thing!' she exclaimed; and, licking up a couple of wafers with her tongue, she ran down-stairs, and pulled out a drawer in the shop, and rummaged until she drew forth a package of flaring caricature valentines, horrible nightmares of vulgarity, left over from last February's valentine season.

'This'll end it for gude an' a!' she laughed, evidently with the keenest enjoyment, as she selected a bow-legged sailor, with an enormous head and a squinting leer, supposed to be mouth-

ing something intended for an insult to the recipient. This she folded, and, writing in a hand as near like that of the address as possible, 'The Book-mark,' on the back of it, she enclosed it in Euphie's addressed sheet, wafered it, and gave a boy a halfpenny to carry it straight to Andrew Craig.

Andrew was talking to a friend in front of his mother's door when the urchin touched him on the sleeve and presented the letter. He glanced at the address, and a wild thrill of joy sent the light to his eyes and a flush to his cheek, but he put it in his pocket and continued his conversation. It was enough that she had answered. The letter felt thick to the touch; she had returned the book-mark, as he had hoped she would! He would see her yet before he left, and maybe—oh, God grant it!—maybe he might yet go away as full of hope as he was now of misery and despair. His friend went away, and with a light foot he sprang up the steps, two at a time, and entered the house. His mother was out somewhere, and with trembling hands he tore open the folded sheet, and saw written on a coarse paper within, 'The Book-mark.' He unfolded the paper and leant back against the wall, white as death, his eyes staring dully at the horrible thing. He cleared his throat, which had grown suddenly dry, and then looked closely at the address.

It was Euphie's handwriting, no doubt of that. He would have known it anywhere. He had known it ever since they had been at school together. God! and how he had loved her!—the woman who had sent him, in response to this

last fond appeal, a—a thing like that! But she should not escape! He would tell her in plain language what he thought of her, and all her duplicity. She had made life in the old town intolerable with the torment of her presence. She had driven him away from home and kindred, to seek among strangers the forgetfulness he could not find here. It was well he had fixed principles, or he might, in the madness of his pain, have gone headlong to the devil. No, she should *not* escape his just anger.

Andrew went into the ben-end and locked the door behind him, and, full of outraged love, sat down to write.

And there was no angel, wise and far-seeing, to stay his hand, or to say, 'Never *write* unkind things.' No one to say, 'If you *must* give place to the devil so far as to hurl poisoned javelins at those you have loved, and who have provoked you, do it in person, with the fire in your eye and the flush on your brow, and the words like sparks flying hot from your lips; for afterward the very remembrance of your anger will preserve love to you, and with time will come the reflection that all these cruel things were spoken hastily, and are therefore to be forgotten. But, as you value unpurchasable human love and human friendship, set not down such words on paper; for the passion passes with the flash from your eye and the blood that returns to the heart, but the cold cruel words remain, and you will not be by to see how they sting and stab and slay. And your friend may be in trouble when they come, and you shall have added to it; or sick, and you shall have made him worse; if

happy, you have spoiled the day for him, and of a friend made an enemy.'

There was no one to reason thus with Andrew, and he wrote and wrote, in ink apparently, but really in his heart's blood.

When his mother came in, his chest was packed and locked and bound taut with a stout rope, and he was busy nailing on the address.

'Dear me, laddie, what's a' this?' she said, looking at him shrewdly. 'I thocht ye werena gaun awa' till Monday?'

'Oh, I see nae use in stayin' till Monday, mither dear; I'll no' be richt noo till I get awa'. I'll go this afternune.'

'I kent that black limmer wouldna let ye alane!' she said, with a wild burst of tears. 'Oh, ye canna hide onything frae me. I saw the laddie gi'en ye the letter, an' I kent whaur it cam' frae.'

'Aweel, mither, what canna be cured maun be endured, I fancy. I wuss her weel—after a'. I'll get the better o't a' when I get ower the water an' oot o' sicht.'

'Did ye ever get speech o' Euphie hersel', Andrae? I've aye a notion that Nannie Lyn was at the bottom o' a' this. I dinna think it's been Euphie hersel'.'

'Oh yes, it was; I ken noo,' said Andrew, locking his carpet-bag viciously.

'Hoo did ye ken?' asked the sagacious mother.

'I wrote to her—yon was the answer.'

'An' what did she say?'

'*That's* a' she said,' answered Andrew, and,

handing his mother the ugly missive, himself went down-stairs.

In the afternoon, as Euphie went up the moor to take in the clothes, which were dry now, she heard a shrill voice calling—

'Hoy, Euphie! hoy!'

She turned, and waited until a boy, breathless with running, came, and without ceremony, said, handing her a letter—

'Andrew Craig bade me gie ye that.'

'Where is he?' asked Euphie, anxious for news.

'He's awa to Austreelyie. Jock Watt drove his kist to the boat at Anst'er, an' he's awa' to Leith wi' her.'

'Thank ye,' said Euphie mechanically, and went up among the whins to read this second letter.

CHAPTER XI.

DANCE MUSIC—ITS ORIGIN.

EUPHIE went up among the whins, and, sitting behind a bush, opened the letter with shaking hands. He had written 'good-bye,' after all. What had he said?—what had he said?

Andrew, like herself, had always been one of the old master's brightest scholars, and when he had left school he by no means stopped reading. At that remote period Inweerie boasted a public library, though of a limited kind, and the books borrowed on the lending day, which was Sunday afternoon, were pretty well exhausted by Andrew Craig. There were books of travel and fiction by good authors, and by constant communication with such he had unconsciously acquired a terse and correct way of expressing himself when he had occasion to write. On this occasion, being strung to the highest tension of feeling, he surpassed himself, and his words struck the girl like hammers. He was too hot to be conventional, and simply began—

'EUPHIE,—If I have lost all faith in women, I have you, and you only, to thank for it. I had

read in books of wicked women who wilfully brought men to shipwreck and ruin for their own vanity, but I did not dream that such depravity as you have shown could be hid behind such a face. Wherever I go I will never see a face like yours but I will remember that a mocking, lying soul is at the back of it; I will never hear a voice like yours but I will think of you, laughing and talking to the men, the poor weak men, who come in to buy whisky in Syme's shop. To think that the little yellow-haired lassie I loved at school should turn out like this! When I returned the book-mark, it was to remind you of our schooldays. I thought maybe you would send it back for me to keep for auld lang-syne, but I never dreamed that you would insult me as you have done. I will try to forgive you in time, but it will need time to forget too. The money I had saved up in the bank will keep my kind old mother in comfort for some years, so I can leave her with a clear conscience. I do not ask you to forgive me for the hard and bitter things I have written, for I think you deserve them all, because I know that you know better. ANDREW CRAIG.'

Euphie shrank into herself as if scorched by the hot and burning words which Andrew had written in his righteous anger. What was he writing to her like that for? When did she ever insult him? How was she to know he wanted the book-mark back? And he fancied her selling whisky! *She* selling whisky in Syme's shop! Never, while the world stood! Never! But what did he mean by all this? What had she

ever done that he should taunt her with depravity? Had he not left her of his own accord, and gone walking with Mary Scott, while she waited and waited for him, ready to jump up and leave Bob Syme sitting there as soon as he came? Had he not insulted her by making love to Mary right before her eyes up in Greendykes' kitchen? Would she ever forget the awful suffocating grip at her heart when she turned and saw them there? 'Oh, Andrae, Andrae, why did you ill-use me like that?' she moaned, breaking out into audible speech and bitter tears of hopeless despair.

After a little she folded the cruel letter and put it into her bosom, and having cried until that old pain again woke in her heart, she dried her eyes and began to gather the clothes off the whins, and fill them into the basket. It was pretty heavy, and she rested it upon the gunwale of an old boat which lay rotting on the edge of the moor, waiting till the traces of tears should fade from her eyes before facing Mrs. Lyn.

'Hillo, lassie, is that you?' said Thomas Mathers, emerging from the other side of the boat.

'Ay, I'm takin' a rest,' explained Euphie.

'I was just takin' a dander afore gaun doon to my tea,' he said, and he drew out a slip of paper from his pocket and handed it to her to read.

'What's this, Tammas?'

'Oo, just twa-ree lines oot o' a fu' heart to express sympathy wi' the puir souls left desolate that nicht o' the gale,' he answered, with that pathetic hungering for sympathy and companion-

ship which he craved continually, and instinctively sought for now. He would show Euphie Lyn a poem he had composed sooner than any one else in the town. Euphie read—

'There was wailin' in Ramah, lamentin' an' grief;
Nae balm could assuage, an' nae tear gie relief,' etc.

She read on to the end, and then said honestly—

'It's no' the best poem you've written, Tammas, but it expresses what we a' feel for them, an' that's the main thing.'

'It's a geyan mixed-up life,' she added, handing him back the paper. 'I'm beginnin' to see it's no' a' sunshine, Tammas.'

'No, atweel no, lassie; but the sunshine's bonnie while it lasts, an' it never leaves the heart it has ance visited. The sunshine o' the past lives in the heart o' man, just as the sunlicht o' past ages lives in the bowels o' the earth, to be drawn upon for licht an' warmth when the need for't arises. But ye're no' tellin's hoo ye likit the social last nicht. Didn't Clark just play up yon pibroch grand? Od, I was feared my feet would rin awa' wi' me—though, atweel, my dancin'-days are dune.'

'Ay, it was fine, fine,' assented Euphie, with a faint smile of recollection. 'Indeed, my ain taes were maist set agaun.'

'I'se warrant! I dinna envy the man that can keep his feet still when an auld Scots reel is bein' played, either on the fiddle or the pipes. There maun either be lead in his veins or a wecht at his heart.'

'Ay, that's true,' said Euphie, thinking of the weight at her own heart even now.

'D'ye ken,' began Thomas, now fairly in the vein, having a sympathetic and appreciative listener,—'d'ye ken, lassie, I made a discovery the ither summer, though I never mentioned it to a livin' sowl till the noo? For what's the use o' speakin'? They would only lauch at me, an' say I was daft. The maist half o' the folk in this world are like moles, burrowin' an' borin' i' the earth, wi' een, but nae e'esicht; an' the blue an' silver o' the day, an' the purple an' gold o' the e'enin's, an' the glory o' the Lord in His holy temple o' Nature, they canna see ava; for, ye ken, there's nae siller in a' the like o' that. But, waes me! what they miss—what they miss!'

The poet lapsed into a reverie, and Euphie sighed, reflecting how like Andrew Craig he was in his way of thinking. Andrew and she had watched the sunsets on the Sabbath eves—ah, how often! Now—

'But what did ye discover, Tammas?'

Tammas started, called back from dreamland.

'Discover?' he said hazily. 'Ah!—oo ay; I maist forgot what I wantit to tell ye. Ye ken it's aye been an extraordinar' source o' wonderment to me whaur the Scotch ever got their dance music. But ae mornin', aboot four o'clock, I was oot spreadin' my nets, an' ootower frae me a bit a laerock sprang up, singin', singin', singin'! I think I hear the bit creatur' yet! Up she gaed —up an' up—aye singin', till she was just a mote i' the blue, an' I steekit my een to listen. Aweel, as I stood there wi' my een closed, as sure as death I could see hunders on hunders o' fairies, wee bits o' colour, just like flooers ye've seen dancin' i' the wind, an' they reeled an'

cleekit an' whirled, ay, an' snappit their thooms, in a wild intoxication o' delight, keepin' time to the music that cam' ringin' doon—a perfect oot-poor o' liquid joy an' mirth. An' then she drappit, an' in the silence I opened my een, an' there were the flowers a' nid-noddin' amon' the grass, just as if naething had happened; but I had discovered ane o' Nature's secrets. An' noo, if ony man would come to me wonderin' whaur we get oor reels an' strathspeys, I would tell him to gang oot on a fine summer mornin', when the mists are liftin' frae the Laws, an' the grey speeder wabs are a' strung wi' pearls on the laigh young whins, an' ilka blade o' grass is tipped wi' a diamond, an' the sun is just risin' oot o' the sea; let him stand there an' listen to the laerocks, an' if he has ears to hear ava, he'll sune find oot whaur the Scotch get their dance music frae.'

'Ye're an awfu' man, Tammas,' said Euphie, looking with undisguised admiration at the fisherman's weather-beaten face and well-worn blue waistcoat. 'You should hae been something better than a fisherman.'

'Whisht, lassie, whisht! ye dinna ken what ye're sayin'. Wha but fishers were chosen to be sent oot like lambs amon' wolves, as Christ weel said, to preach His new gospel o' peace an' goodwill an' universal brotherhood to a world rotten to the core wi' selfishness an' pride, an' lust o' power an' pleasure? Wha but fishers left their nets an' followed the puir hameless Carpenter o' Nazareth, only half understandin', but aye believin' in Him through a' up to Calvary? Ay, just as they follow Him yet,

only half comprehendin', but aye believin', just in this very toon. Oh, 'deed, ay, when I hear sae muckle lamentin' ower the condition o' the fishers by folk that ken naething aboot them an' their ways, I think o' what Christ said to the scribes an' Pharisees when they were lookin' doon on their neebors, "These shall enter into the kingdom before you." Na, Euphie lass, I'm prood to be ane o' the craft that Jesus likit to tak' up wi', the men that revolutionised the world by a strength that never was human.'

'Tammas,' said Euphie, breaking in upon him with sudden impulse, 'tell me — who is my father?'

'Lassie!'

'Tell me what you know, Tammas.'

'Aweel, my lass, to tell ye the truth, I've often thocht sin' I spoke to ye that day that ye micht as weel ken the hale story. It's no' lang. When I was sailin' oot o' London ance—I used to take a voyage up the Mediterranean noo an' then when I was a youngster—there was ane o' the sailors, when I happened to say I hailed frae Inweerie, lookit at me a sort o' queer-like. By an' by, when we were by oorsel's reevin' ropes, he says to me, "You're frae Inweerie?" "Yes," I said. "Do ye ken a Mrs. Lyn there?" says he. Weel, I minded o' Jack Lyn an' his wife an' a bairn comin' to the toon,—North country folk they said they were,—an' they took the very hoose they're in noo, that hoose o' Syme's. Jack he gaed to the sea, and his wife she keepit a bit shop, an' they never had ony mair family. I tell't the sailor a' this, an' he lauched, an', says he, "I houp that wife o' Jack Lyn's 'll be gude

to that bairn, for he got a gude sum o' money wi' her. The captain, before he sailed, adverteesed for a servant, an' got this Jack Lyn's wife—she gaed to service when Jack took his long voyages to Indy, ye see. When the captain cam' back, his wife was dead, an' Nannie was in the hoose wi' the infant. Aweel, the captain had made a rin-awa' marriage, ye see, an' noo, bein' in desperation, an' haein' to sail in a week to Calcutta, he says, 'Look here, Mrs. Lyn. The child seems to be thrivin' wi' ye. Here is my cheque for £1000 now, and when I return and find the child well, you can bring her up so far, an' I will see you comfortably provided for.'" Well, Mrs. Lyn took the child, cam' to Inweerie, and they settled there, passin' you aff as their ain, for the captain or his ship were never mair seen after they got fairly oot to sea. The captain's wife was the prettiest young creature he ever saw, this sailor said, and ye may be sure, Euphie, I was very interested. Jack Lyn told him the hale story with his ain lips ae day, when he had met him, half-seas ower, in Leith. Next day I tried to get him to tell me the captain's name, but he wadna; an' mair, he bound me doon no' to mention the thing, for Jack an' he were freends. An' I never would, Euphie, until I saw that Nannie Lyn was takin' advantage o' her position as yer mither to force ye to a marriage against your will.'

'An' that's a', Tammas?'

'That's a', my lass.'

'Tammas, I'm glad ye tell't me. I said to ye before that I would rin awa'; I'm gaun noo.'

'Dae naething rash, my bairn, dae naething

rash!' said Thomas, with evident concern. 'Tell Nannie Lyn that I've tell't ye the truth; she'll no' force ye then.'

'It would mak' nae difference. Ye see, I've naebody to tak' my pairt. An', Tammas,' she said, looking into his face with sudden alarm, 'I'm feared for mysel'; if that Bob Syme comes back to the hoose, an' torments me, I'll—I'll *kill* him. It's a' his doin's an' my mith— Nannie Lyn's. Atween them, they've broken my heart.'

With a sudden jerk she hoisted the basket on to her side, a sob escaping her lips as she turned away and walked down the brae.

'God help the puir thing,' said Thomas. 'I wonder, noo, if I shouldna go wast an' see Andrae Craig? I believe there's some deeviltry at the bottom o' a' this.'

Thomas went, but he was too late. Andrew was away, and his mother was in bed weeping, as mothers weep.

CHAPTER XII.

A REVELATION.

THAT very evening Bob Syme, in a warm overcoat and enormous muffler, stepped into Mrs. Lyn's kitchen. She herself was out, but Euphie was in, which was more to the purpose, for Bob had come to seal his fate once for all, feeling invincible.

'Is your mither no' in?' he began, by way of introduction.

Euphie was lying back in the depths of an old-fashioned easy-chair, which was covered with blue chintz, her yellow hair loosened somewhat, one hand lying listlessly in her lap, the other closed over something. She did not look up when he entered, or when he spoke.

'Ye're no' speirin' hoo I am, after me riskin' my life to please ye.'

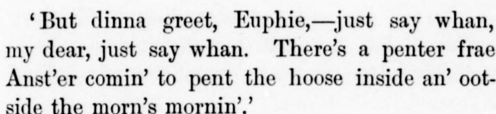
No answer.

'I aye thocht ye would be doon to see me when ye kent I wasna able to come up.'

No answer.

'What would ye thocht, Euphie, if I had gaen doon to the boddom that nicht?'

No answer; but—was that a tear trickling from under her long lashes? Ah, that had touched her!



'But dinna greet, Euphie,—just say whan, my dear, just say whan. There's a penter frae Anst'er comin' to pent the hoose inside an' ootside the morn's mornin'.'

There was no stir nor movement in the chair, only a tear trickling slowly down her cheek as she gazed into the fire.

'Eh ay, it was awfu',' he resumed, feeling that he was working on her feelings; 'I was that fu' o' saut water I couldna speak for twa 'oors an' mair. Aweel, I'm no' carin' noo, when it's ower. I said I would let ye see I wasna feared, and I've latten ye see. But I'm wantin' ye ower-by noo, an' I cam' to see gin ye'll let me pit up the cries on Sabbath mornin'?'

There was no answer but the trickling tears on both cheeks, and the hands lay inert.

'Eh, my lassie,' pursued Bob, quite touched by this melting softness; and, feeling he had won her at last, he rose and stepped over, and laid his hand about her neck with a gentle hug. 'Eh, my lass, will that dae?'

Roused by the touch, she rose up, and looked at him in hazy surprise.

'What is't? What did ye say?' she said absently.

'I wis speirin' if that'll dae?' he repeated, with an insinuating smile.

'Dae? Oh ay—yes—'deed, ay—it'll dae.'

She held her hand up to the back of her head and smiled at him.

'My head's a kind o' soomin'; I dinna just ken what I'm sayin' or doin'. I think I'll gang up to my bed.'

'But wha'll mind the shop?' exclaimed Bob

in alarm. He enjoyed attending to his own business, but he felt his dignity would be seriously compromised by appearing behind Nannie Lyn's counter.

Mrs. Lyn's appearance solved the problem, however.

'Whaur are ye gaun, lassie?' she asked, scanning Euphie's dazed and bewildered countenance.

Euphie passed her mutely, and with her right hand still closed went mechanically up-stairs.

'Let her alane,' said Bob. 'It's a' richt. Her head's sair, but she says I can put in the cries for Sabbath.'

'No!' exclaimed Mrs. Lyn, her face brightening with inward gladness; 'no' possible!'

'Ay. I speired if Sabbath would dae, an' she said yes. She grat when I tell't her hoo near I was drooned. Ay, puir thing, she grat.'

'Me, she's been behavin' awfu' queer this while; but there, ye never can tell what a lassie 'll dae. But, Bob, ye'll keep your word an' mak' me liferented in this hoose noo when it's a' settled? I'm sure mony a sweet pound-note I've paid your faither; an' I can tell ye it's no' ilka ane could get the like o' Euphie Lyn for a wife.'

'Oh, I'll liferent ye o' the hoose,' said Bob cheerfully.

'Ay, but I maun hae't in black and white afore the waddin'-day, ye ken. Faigs! ance ye hae her hard an' fast, I micht whussle on my thoom.'

'Aweel, say Saturday next—the day after the morn. I can go to Anst'er an' get the deed o' liferent made oot.'

While this paction was being made down-stairs, Euphie stood holding her hand to her head and staring at herself with a puzzled expression in the looking-glass. She put up the other hand to her temples, and as she opened her palm, a bit of paper fluttered to the floor.

'Ah, that's it! Oh, I couldna think what it was!' she exclaimed, with infinite relief; and she picked up the paper and spread it out before her, and sat down, looking at it gloatingly. 'I couldna mind—oh, I couldna mind—what made me greet; but it's this. Andrae, Andrae, my love! Oh, my love!'

She pressed her hands together and wrung them silently, as she greedily perused the words, gentle and manly and true as the writer himself—a very different missive indeed from that she had read in the moor only a few hours ago.

When she had returned with the dried clothes she found Mrs. Lyn prepared to go to Pittenweem, and, since her desire was to be back before dark, she was naturally annoyed at being kept so long.

'Ye micht hae wushen' a hale washin' an pu[illegible]en't oot the time ye've been bringin' in thae [illegible]va-ree duds frae the whuns,' she scolded. '[illegible]e an' mind the shop when I'm awa'.'

Euphie minded the shop mechanically, as if something had died within her, and nothing that could possibly happen could matter any more. She made up the fire afresh and swept up the hearth, moving about with slow and heavy footsteps. Then she folded the clothes ready for the mangle, and, all being done, she came into the shop and sat down, with her two elbows upon the counter and her face between

her hands, thinking of the long, interminable years of a human life. It seemed as if she would have to live ages on ages before she would at last, weary and alone, reach the ordinary period for retiring for ever from a world that had lost its charm. She was sitting thus when a customer entered, making a considerable purchase for the victualling of a boat's crew. In payment she handed Euphie a five-pound note.

'Have ye nae sma'er change?' asked Euphie, looking into the cash drawer.

'No' me. I wouldna have come the noo, only for the sake o' gettin' the note changed. Oor auld ane wants half-a-sovereign, an' ye ken if I was to gie *him* that five-pound note, it's no' ten shillin's would sair him. Will your mither no' hae ony change by her?'

'She's awa' to Pittenweem,' said Euphie; 'but,' she added, after some hesitation, 'I micht see if the key's in her pooch.'

Euphie fumbled in the pocket of the dress which Mrs. Lyn had laid off, and found the key of the chest up-stairs, and the little tin box inside, where she kept her money.

'I've got the key,' she said. 'Just wait a meenit, an' I'll rin up an' see.'

She had never done this before, but this was a near neighbour and a good customer, whom she wished to oblige.

The chest opened easily enough, and so did the tin box, and taking out two pound-notes from the pile, she ran down-stairs and settled with the customer, who departed.

Then Euphie took the five-pound note up-stairs, and, opening the little box, took out the remaining

notes to place it with them, when her eye fell on a paper, lying at the bottom, with 'Yours ever faithfully, Andrew Craig,' written on the folded edge. Without hesitation she took it out and deposited the notes, knelt beside the open chest and read it, knowing as by instinct that here was something concerning herself. There was little in it, but that little—ah, how much!

'MY DEAR EUPHIE,—We have been so long friends that I cannot go away without first seeing you and having a crack with you for auld lang-syne. It's very hard for me to believe all I hear, but if it is your will to prefer another man to me I must just bear it. But I say, God bless you wherever you go, or whatever you do. I send you the book-mark which my dear little lass gave me long ago—it will make you think of bygone days, and of the laddie that loved you, and loves you now, though you have taken up with another. I hope you will consent to meet me along the Pittenweem braes—just once before I go. I will say nothing to you which a third person might not hear.

'If you don't wish to write, just send me back the book-mark, and I will know to meet you to-morrow night at seven, east of the mineral water, for the last time, Euphie. If you don't return it, and I get no letter from you, I will know you don't want to speak to me again; but for all that, dear Euphie, may God bless and keep you is the prayer of—Yours ever faithfully,

'ANDREW CRAIG.'

So this—*this* was the meaning of the returned

book-mark and the awful letter! Mrs. Lyn—that wicked Nannie Lyn whom she had called mother so long—had not scrupled to open her letter and take this out, leaving only the book-mark. And now he was away, away on the wide ocean, thinking her false and unworthy—she who had been so true!—ah, would he ever know how true! She kissed the letter, and put it carefully in her bosom, close to her skin, and, locking both boxes, came down-stairs and put the keys back into Mrs. Lyn's pocket. But her head seemed to be in a strange whirl, and when a child came into the shop and asked for sweeties she gave her tea.

She was so happy, and yet so wretched. She took out the paper from her bosom, and read it again and again, till she seemed to forget everything—where she was, who she was, or what she was doing sitting in that chair, holding the letter fast in her right hand. A soothing semi-unconsciousness stole over her, a sort of mental coma, in which she heard a voice speaking dimly of something she did not try to comprehend. She felt half awakened by a touch, and heard some one saying something, and she had answered Yes, yes, or No, no—she could not remember what, her head felt so queer—until now, now! she had awakened from the strange torpor, and there was the letter—the dear, dear letter, and he was away, thinking her false! *Why* had Mrs. Lyn done this? To compel her to marry Bob Syme? Ah, then! To bed, to bed now, and to-morrow, to-morrow, up and away from them all for ever. Where? Anywhere, to earn her living honestly and in peace.

'Losh bless me, lassie,' said Mrs. Lyn, coming

up-stairs some half-hour later, 'are ye no' comin' doon a wee? Come doon an' I'll mak' ye a cup o' tea, you an' Bob. C'wa', like a leddy. I'm just as high as Gilderoy to think ye've made it up at last atween ye.'

'I'm in bed for the nicht; I'm no' comin' doon,' answered Euphie quietly.

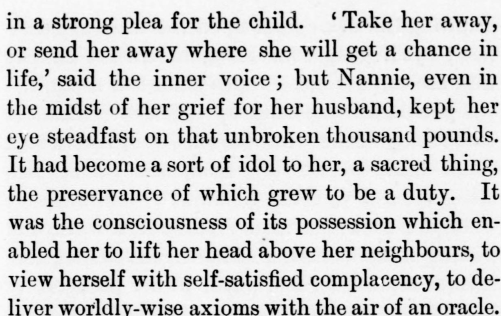
'Eh, but ye can be a dour limmer when ye like! Ye micht be ceevil to the chap noo when ye've gi'en him your consent.'

Euphie fell to wondering what the woman could mean. *She* consent! She make it up with—*that thing!* They must be mad—and, what was worse, she knew Mrs. Lyn was wicked. To-morrow she would be away from them all with the letter safe in her bosom.

CHAPTER XIII.

BY THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF.

MRS. LYN could not understand the quiet, settled look on Euphie's face next morning. It irritated and troubled her. Conscience, though overridden by the ruling passion of greed, contrived occasionally to make her uncomfortable, and she was uncomfortable now. From her earliest remembrance the care of the pennies had been instilled into this woman as the one grand lesson of life—to use them sparingly, to give still more sparingly, and above all things, to learn to 'lay by.' She had profited by her training, for she not only laid money by, but she kept it laid by; and the thousand pounds which she had received with the infant Euphie was 'laid by' in the bank to this good day. Conscience had said, 'Educate the child as her parent would have educated her;' but Greed argued, 'Where was the use? She would never need it—and—the parents were dead; and if she broke on that money there would be no more coming to make it up. She would use the interest—that is, part of it—only.' Again and again conscience had protested; and when Jack Lyn was drowned, it once more put



in a strong plea for the child. 'Take her away, or send her away where she will get a chance in life,' said the inner voice; but Nannie, even in the midst of her grief for her husband, kept her eye steadfast on that unbroken thousand pounds. It had become a sort of idol to her, a sacred thing, the preservance of which grew to be a duty. It was the consciousness of its possession which enabled her to lift her head above her neighbours, to view herself with self-satisfied complacency, to deliver worldly-wise axioms with the air of an oracle.

With a low order of intellect, and a great deal of animal shrewdness, it was to her what principle, heroism, talent, is to the possessors of such; the consciousness of its possession lent sapience to her speech, decision to her actions, and serenity to her rather imperious countenance.

For a long time back that serenity had been seriously disturbed; for if Euphie married a young fisherman—Andrew Craig, for instance—and he, like Jack Lyn, were to be drowned, what about the deposit then? Left a widow, with helpless children, perhaps!—what about the thousand pounds then? It was a risk that must be avoided by fair means or foul; for, whatever came of Euphie, that thousand pounds must remain intact; Mrs. Lyn's very life was bound up in the preservation of it now. Her plans for Euphie's worldly welfare had succeeded so far; their perfect success last night surprised even herself. The disagreeable, disturbing consciousness that she was doing wrong only stimulated her perverse nature the more to completely accomplish her end.

Look, see, there's three pound,' she said,

counting the money out upon the table at breakfast; 'ye'll gang awa' alang to Anst'er an' pay that accoont for me. I was gaun last nicht, but wi' you bidin' sae lang up amon' the whuns I could only gang the length o' Pittenweem. Come hame by the low road, and I'll set Bob alang to meet ye i' the gloamin'.'

Euphie took the money without a word, and placing it in the corner of her handkerchief, tied it in a secure knot and put it in her pocket.

'Ye ken whaur to gang wi't?' queried Mrs. Lyn, resenting this still, lifeless behaviour.

'Yes, I ken,' said Euphie, and, rising, went up-stairs.

'Eh, noo, isn't she a dour limmer?' muttered Mrs. Lyn to herself, beginning to feel more and more uncomfortable. She always had gone and paid her accounts herself, and this morning had only given Euphie this commission in order, first, to get her out of her sight with that provoking calm face of hers; and second, to give Bob the opportunity to do a little love-making in the home-coming. Notwithstanding all this, an indefinable misgiving had begun to disturb her—and oh, that this marriage were only well over! She would never take in hand to bring up another child—not she!—unless, indeed, it brought another thousand pounds, as Euphie had done. Ah yes, a bit money laid by was a fine thing—ay, a fine thing. The thought of it was as balm to her uneasy mind; and conscience, most unusually restive this morning, was once more laid.

When the work of the forenoon was all done up, and the dinner over, Euphie came down dressed for the road.

'Noo, ye'll be sure an' come by the low road, for Bob's comin' that way to meet ye.'

Euphie made no reply, except to lift her eyes to Mrs. Lyn's with a steady, regretful gaze. The tears rose and filled them as she looked, and this was all that was wanting to complete Mrs. Lyn's exasperation.

'What the mischief are ye greetin' at?' she broke out, as she followed her down the passage to the door. 'My faigs! ye'll get mair to greet for yet, ye thrawn limmer. 'Deed, I pity the man that gets ye. A dorty, discontented jaud! Peengin' an' grainin' for God knows what!'

Euphie turned on the doorstep, as if hesitating to go.

'An' him wi' a' that property an''— she resumed; but Euphie wheeled round, and went out along the street and turned the corner, Mrs. Lyn watching her with an uneasy feeling of apprehension. Then she came in and sat down on a stool in the shop, and with her hands clasped in her lap, sat calculating mentally for a long time.

'I'll tell ye what I'll dae,' she said aloud, as if in answer to some inward expostulation. 'I'll tak' a hale year's interest, an' buy her a providin' the like was never seen in this toon. Surely that'll dae!'

Once again conscience was mollified. This would not make up for a broken heart, but it was a concession. Besides, Nannie reflected, it would be well repaid in the saving of rent, when Bob had liferented herself in the house.

She felt considerably more at ease as she rose and shook down her apron preparatory to serving a customer.

Euphie had turned towards the house of Thomas Mathers before she went on her way.

'My faither's no' in; he's aff at the sea,' said a little urchin at the door.

'Well, tell your faither—be *sure* an' tell him —that I came up to see him, will ye?'

The urchin assented, and Euphie gave him a penny, and, with a slight sob, walked away.

The sun was setting and the tide was low when Bob Syme dropped in on his way to meet Euphie, according to the hints received from Mrs. Lyn.

'I had ill gettin' oot the nicht,' he said. 'There's a meetin' o' the Toon Cooncil, ye ken, an' the elections are comin' on, an' I'm expeckin' we'll be geyan thrang farther on i' the nicht.'

'Oo, weel, ye can come hame the faster,' responded Mrs. Lyn pompously. 'It's lichtsome to see ye thrivin' sae weel, Bob, my man. Speak,—no' mony brides 'll hae the providin' Euphie Lyn 'll hae. I've been an eident, carefu', weel-dain' woman a' my days, an' Euphie 'll ken the gude o't noo.'

'Ay,' said Bob, 'but ye needna povereese yersel', ye ken. I'll hae plenty.'

'Ay; but, ye ken, a mither's heart, laddie—a mither's heart! What'll a mither no' dae for her bairn?' And Mrs. Lyn pursed her mouth, and raised her eyebrows, and drew in her breath impressively, as she added, 'Ay, 'deed, ay.'

'Aweel, I'm aff,' cried Bob gaily; and off he set to meet Euphie. The sunset rays were slanting low above the braes as Bob walked gaily along on the green bank below—the bank washed into curves, and scooped irregularly off all along the edges by the sea. He was in high

spirits, for of all the many girls he had fancied and made love to, there was none he had liked so well as Euphie Lyn. He was quite in the humour to settle down and become staid and respectable now, for those last two love-affairs of his had turned out rather troublesome—in fact, one had cost him quite a sum of money to get it hushed up and the father's anger appeased; as for the other, that wild, high-spirited girl, whom he had so solemnly sworn to marry—some time—he hoped she wouldn't turn up now before he was safely married, after which he could snap his fingers at her, seeing she had no letters to prove any promise of marriage. But Euphie—Euphie was the one for him now—she and no other; for she was as good as she was bonnie, and he had never dared to be other than respectful in her presence. Why, here he was engaged to be married to her, and he had never once summoned up courage to kiss her! It seemed so impossible, even to him who was such an old hand at sweethearting.

He had reached a great deep chasm under the brae, which the sea had hollowed out between two rocks, slanting up from the sands some hundred feet below. He looked down with something of a shudder, as he remembered an old story of a man who had been thrown over there by some enemy one dark night, and his poor mangled body found stiff next day. He was so engrossed by his calculations as to where he would fall, how he would fall,—down headlong to instant death, or tumbling somersaults and alighting on the jagged rocks to the left,—that he did not observe a slight form descending from

the other side of the brae above, nor hear the soft footfall on the grass behind him. He started, and shrank instinctively back from the brink as a small hand was laid upon his arm, and a voice said quietly—

'So you *did* come to meet me!'

. . . . . .

It wore on to eight o'clock, and to nine o'clock, and Mrs. Lyn stood on the doorstep in the light of the moon, uncertain whether to be angry or well-pleased at the way Euphie was staying. Of course she was with Bob, and the longer she was in his company the better; indeed, it was quite a relief to think she was taking to him after all, and moonlight strolls, no doubt, were quite in order now, but—she wished she was home. The uneasy misgiving of the morning began to grow into an undefined dread; she could not stay in the house, where the lamp was lit and a cheerful fire burning. When customers came in she served them, and followed them to the door and stood there, shivering with the chilly night air. She had at last turned to go in, determined to compose herself and be sensible, when she saw a crowd of men coming down the street, enclosing a smaller group, who carried something heavy in their arms.

'What is't?' she cried, seizing by the arm one of the crowd as he passed the door.

'It's Bob Syme, they say. They got him lyin' doon at the boddom o' yon great hole atween the rocks, alang the Pittenweem Road.'

Mrs. Lyn's hand dropped from the man's arm as if paralysed.

'An' whaur's Euphie?' she gasped.

CHAPTER XIV.

NEMESIS.

THREE days had passed, but the injured man had not yet opened his lips to answer that question. For twelve hours he had lain unconscious, and when at last he came back to the world of the living, the doctor had strictly ordered that no questions should be asked his patient until he had still further recovered, especially now that recovery was but a question of time and judicious care. All sorts of rumours were afloat; for Nannie Lyn, in her first dread, had outspokenly told how Bob had gone to meet Euphie. But *where* was Euphie? That was the first question; the second followed naturally—*Why* had she disappeared simultaneously with this accident? The whole town talked of nothing else. Andrew Craig's mother shook her head and said, 'Least said, soonest mended,' but she was glad now her son had sailed at the time he did. Had it not been for the disappearance of Euphie, it might have been considered an accidental fall; but now it transpired that a boy coming home along the braes just before the darkening saw a man and a woman standing close by the cliff, and evidently quarrelling; for

he could hear the sound of their angry voices in the quietness, even where he stood a long way off. He had turned to look, thinking they were two drunk gangrels maybe, when the woman suddenly pushed the man over the brae. He was afraid, and ran home, and told his mother what he had seen, and thus had the whole affair been discovered. Then gradually it also leaked out that Nannie Lyn had been forcing Euphie to this marriage against her will. Thomas Mathers had let out this much in his first horror at hearing the news; and now Nannie came in for universal reprobation, marriage in old Inweerie being looked upon as a sacred and solemn thing, to be contracted only where there was mutual love. Still, it was an awful thing for any one to do, and the strangest thing of all was that when Bob came to be declared convalescent he would not open his lips on the subject.

'It was naebody's business but his ain,' he snapped, even to the inquiries of the doctor; and, strange to say, he manifested the most intense and incomprehensible astonishment when he heard that Euphie Lyn had never been seen or heard of since. He knitted his brows and seemed lost in thought whenever the subject was mentioned; but he said nothing, not even to his most intimate friends.

Mrs. Lyn had come down that night after the men had carried him in, but she had never come back.

She had not even made inquiries, which deepened the mystery to outsiders; but this, like many more mysteries, was clear enough to the chief party concerned.

For Mrs. Lyn, after finding that nothing could be got out of Bob in his present unconscious state, had come home, locked up the shop, and run up-stairs for a warm shawl, determined to go along the road and see if Euphie was not coming on belated, or to find if perchance she too had not fallen over the cliff. In nervous haste she laid the candlestick upon the table, but in doing so saw that Euphie had left the handkerchief with the money still knotted in it upon the mirror-stand. She snatched it up angrily. There was a folded paper addressed to Mrs. Lyn under it, and this she sat down and opened with shaking fingers.

'I cannot call you mother any longer, and I cannot stay here any longer. A woman came in and wanted change, and I took your keys and went up-stairs to get the change, and in the tin box I got Andrew Craig's letter, and I did not think it was stealing to take what belonged to me. I am going away, never to come back. If you had been my mother it would be a sin in me to leave you, but I have found out that you are not my mother, and that accounts for your hardness and your cruel conduct to me. You have no love for me, and don't care how I suffer, so long as you can only get your own way. You have broken my heart; but I wish you well, and I hope your conscience will let you sleep for the way you have treated Andrew Craig and me. I have not taken a penny of your money, although I could have done it with a good conscience. I have the money I made at the herring this Lammas, that's all. Good-bye. I will try to

think as kindly about you as I can, and God will keep me. EUPHIE LYN.'

Now, when Mrs. Lyn read this letter, the first thing she did was to run down-stairs in a demented sort of way and lock the front-door on the inside, bolt the back-door, and then crawl up-stairs again, moaning—

'Oh dear—a—dear! What's this o't?—what's this o't?'

Nemesis, swift and sure-footed, was upon her; she was found out! Not only in that low and despicable trick played on Euphie and Andrew Craig, with the deliberate purpose of extinguishing the love between the two, but also in the matter of Euphie's parentage!

She sat down on the chair and read the letter over again, and then she took the candle and ran into the next room, and unlocked the chest and took out the tin box. Sure enough, the note she had so dexterously abstracted from Andrew Craig's letter, and hidden here under her money, was gone! But who—*who*—WHO could have told Euphie about herself and the money? Oh, the money!—with the interest alone used up to this day—while the girl went with only the clothes she herself had earned in doing the housework. Who in all the wide world knew of *that* but herself, now that Jack Lyn was dead? Could he have mentioned it when in his cups to any one? or could it be possible she herself had talked in her sleep, and so have let the cat out of the pock in that way? It was all a mystery—as great a mystery as this finding of Bob Syme! Could Euphie

have really met him, and, resenting his love-making, have pushed him over? She wouldn't wonder; for she could be dour when she liked, just like her father the captain! Nannie Lyn paced up and down, and but and ben, wringing her hands and bemoaning herself; for now a great dread had taken hold of her—what if Euphie knew more than she herself did? What if she should yet send some one to demand an account of her stewardship? She shook as if with ague at the thought. What! her thousand pounds—that thousand pounds she had preserved so carefully, not breaking upon it even for a dress for the child, making one out of her own old ones, rather! What was to be done? What *could* be done?

It was a very white and haggard face that Nannie Lyn presented next morning when a rap came to the door.

'I haena been in my bed a' nicht,' she explained, 'an' I'll no' open the shop the day. I'm gaun awa' to see if I can get ony word o' Euphie.'

'Me! whaur could the lassie gang to?' exclaimed the sympathetic neighbour.

'Gude kens! Young folk nooadays are no' as they were wont to be. They've nae nateral affection.'

It was considered very right and proper for Nannie Lyn to go in search of her daughter, but people began to wonder when she did not return within the fortnight. When she did arrive, the astounding news circulated through the town that she had only come back to pack up her goods and household furniture, having no desire

to stay longer in a town in which she had met with such sorrow. Of Euphie she had heard nothing, and when asked where she was going, she had answered—

'To the North country, where I was brought up.'

And to the North country, that wide and undefined place, went Mrs. Lyn accordingly; for, after having drawn her deposit out of the bank in Edinburgh, she had spent the remainder of the fortnight in looking about for a secluded hamlet where no one who knew her in old Inweerie was likely to find her out. In the dark of the morning she went, for who could tell what might happen next?

'An awfu' onearthly 'oor o' the mornin' that to leave the toon,' remarked Saunders, as he paced the pier-end with two or three others that afternoon. 'Whaur's she awa' till?'

'The North country, I believe,' answered Jamie Scott.

'The North kintry! Micht as weel say the North Pole. If that lassie Euphie comes back to the toon to speir aboot her mither, wha's gaun to send her to the North kintry? The North kintry's as big as Rooshy, an' as mony toons in't.'

'She cam' frae there-awa',' said Jamie, by way of explanation, 'an' Euphie 'll readily ken a' aboot her mither's folk an' whaur they bide.'

'She ga'e Bob his kail through the reek afore she gaed, onyway,' laughed Saunders.

'What d'ye mean, Saunders?' asked Thomas Mathers, pausing in his walk to look at the old salt.

'Od, when she launded him ower the rock. By faigs! he got a bonnie smack.'

'An' d'ye railly think, Saunders, it was Euphie Lyn did *that?*' queried Thomas, in amazement. 'I aye ga'e ye credit for some sma' judgment, but I'm beginnin' to doobt it noo.'

'Na, it was never Euphie Lyn,' said Jamie Scott, with conviction.

Saunders, from under his sou'-wester, looked from Thomas to Jamie, and from Jamie to Thomas, as if bewildered.

'But, gude-gosh, did that laddie no' say he saw a woman shove him ower?'

'Ay, a woman; but there's mair women in the world than ane, Saunders, my man; an' Bob, I'm expeckin', had mair sweethearts than ane.'

'Ay, 'deed, ay, Tammas—mair than ane or twa either,' echoed Jamie Scott.

Saunders clapped his hand to his ear as though struck by a marline-spike.

'I maun be growin' auld,' he muttered; 'the like o' that never strack me. Losh, min, I'm glad; for, ye ken, I aye a kind o' likit yon bit lassie.'

'But I can tell ye something better than that, Saunders,' said Thomas, tilting back his cap off his forehead. 'D'ye mind o' Tam Gowans? Little Tam, that ran awa' frae the schule a gude wheen years syne?'

'Little Tam? Ay, fine that,' answered Saunders.

The whole of the men pacing on the pier suddenly stopped, and gathered around to hear the news. Tam! didn't they all remember Tam —and his breeks!

'Aweel, I was up at the manse this mornin',

an' the minister was lettin' me see a letter a' the way frae Gibraltar. A letter frae Tam.'

'Frae Tam?'

'Frae Gibraltar?'

'Tam Gowans?'

'Ay. An' he's sent this letter to the minister speirin' aboot his mither, an' nae less than a cheque for a hunder pound in't.'

'Hech, hech, min!'

'As true's I'm stannin' here. He's comin' doon this afternune wi' the letter an' the siller.'

'Geordie Gowans an' his wife 'll be twa croose folk the nicht, then. There's the minister noo.'

The fishermen looked up into the town and saw the white-haired minister wending his way by the aid of his staff towards Mrs. Gowans' house.

'But I haena tell't ye the best o't yet,' resumed Thomas, with a sly smile at Saunders, who seemed quite stupefied with the news. 'Tam Gowans is now a lieutenant abuird the *Bellerophon*. It seems he somehoo saved the admiral's life at the risk o' his ain, an' got this promotion. So he's noo Lieutenant Gowans of the *Bellerophon*.'

'Hooray for Tam!' cried Jamie Scott, with enthusiasm.

Saunders, overcome, sat down upon a pile of boards, and with his palms upon his knees and his elbows bent outwards, exclaimed softly, 'Hech, hech, min! the *Bella-ruffian!*'

CHAPTER XV.

'OOR TAM!'

MRS. GOWANS, in a tidy duffle petticoat, shortgown, clean linen apron, and white cap, three-frilled, was standing in the floor mending a net when the minister entered.

'Eh, mercy, sir! there's naebody dead belangin' to me, is there?' she cried, her ruddy colour paling somewhat.

'Not at all, not at all,' said the minister, with a reassuring smile. 'Surely your pastor may call on you at times without being the bearer of evil tidings?'

'Ay, that's true; 'deed, ay. C'wa inower. Me, I just think shame o' the hoose bein' in siccan a mess, but ye ken the nets maun be mended an' the wark dune.'

The minister sat down in the arm-chair and looked around pleasantly.

'Well, I think your house is a perfect marvel of order and cleanliness, Mrs. Gowans; I wish they were all like yours. As for the nets, I must say I like to see you working at them.'

'Aweel, sir,' said Mrs. Gowans, flattered by the minister's praise, which was deserved,

'tradesfolk, ye see, can hae their hooses a' the time like a bendbox; but the fisher-wark, again, it's half in an' half oot the hoose, an' the women have to work as hard's the men. But strangers comin' aboot, an' kennin' naething o' oor ways, dinna tak' that into consideration.'

'That is quite true, Mrs. Gowans, quite true.'

'Me, sir,' she continued, encouraged by this sympathy, and waxing eloquent, 'when I see some o' thae dressed-up gentry creatur's gaun through the toon, an' glowerin' at decent fisher folk as they would glower at heathens or teegers or ony kind o' wild beas', it just gars my bluid boul. A curn ignorant swine! I would like to see ony o' *them* get up i' the mornin' an' tramp aicht mile to Largo sands, an' howk bait, an' back again as hard's ye can pelt, an' the bairns left i' the bed to fend ony way they like till ye come back. Ay, an' then swallow a bite an' a cup o' tea, an' doon to bait five hunder huicks afore ye can lay a finger on the hoose; for, ye ken, the line *maun* be baitit, come o' the hoose 'at likes. The lines an' the net's the bread, ye ken, an' hard-won bread it is.'

'Indeed it is, Mrs. Gowans,' said the patient minister, acknowledging the justice of her remarks. 'But, at the same time, the Lord is good, and I am sure you do not forget to be grateful to Him for the gifts of health and strength with which you are endowed. I am sure you think of God in the midst of your arduous toil many a time. Do you not?'

Mrs. Gowans took up a net-needle, and began to fill it rapidly with twine.

'Oo ay,' she said, elevating her eyebrows.

'But, ye ken, folk canna be aye de-wellin' on thae things. Folk that mak' their livin' that way are different; it's expeckit o' them. But we're no' heathens for a' that; maybe we think a hantle mair than we say. An' the Almichty 'at sees the heart needs naebody to explain to Him hoo things is wi's a'.'

The minister looked into the fire, feeling very tender over this shrewd, strong-willed woman. He had taken a religious tack, intending to wear round and bear down gradually upon the sore subject of her missing son, but he found this would not do.

He tacked again.

'I suppose you feel lonely sometimes, George and you, now that your family are married and in homes of their own?'

'Ay, 'deed, ay, very lonely,' she said, with a heavy sigh; 'but, ye ken, the young maun gang their ain gate, as the auld did afore them.'

'I should think you would feel the quiet in the evenings as you sat alone?' pursued the experienced man of silver hairs.

'Ay, mony a time. Nae farther gane than last Sabbath nicht we were sittin' here oor lane the twa o's, wi' oor taes on the fender there, an' it was cauld and coorse ootside, an' naebody cam' in. An' I sat thinkin', an' he sat thinkin',—baith o's glowerin' i' the fire, an' no' a soond but the nock tickin'. Weel, when it was wearing late, he looks up to me, and he says, says he—

'"Eppie, would ye like to see a Frenchman?"

'"An' that I would, Geordie," says I.

'"Aweel, Eppie," says he, "so would I. I would gie something for the sicht o' a human

face the noo—even though it was a Frenchman's."'

'Oh, but I hope you may yet live to see a more welcome face than a Frenchman's,' said the minister cheerfully, as he fumbled in his coat pocket, and drew out a pair of gold spectacles from their case and set them astride his nose, smiling to himself at this lingering echo of Waterloo.

'I received a letter to-day which I thought would interest you, so I thought I would come down to read it to you;' and he drew from his inside pocket a large blue envelope, and pawkily began to clear his throat. But he got no further. He could not dissemble before Mrs. Gowans' shrewd eyes; she looked at the letter, and then at the old face beaming above it, and, with a loud, wild shriek—

'It's Tam—my Tam!' she fell across the nets.

Yes, the big, strong, hearty woman, who had never quailed or given way all the years she had gone about with the fox of regret gnawing at her heart, but bravely concealed, now fainted for very joy. When she recovered, the house was filled with the neighbours, and the old minister was wiping his spectacles. The neighbours chaffed good-naturedly, and rallied her upon her braw son, now a lieutenant in Her Majesty's ship, no less. And a hundred pounds, too! My certie!

But the passionate, self-willed woman would listen to nothing about money, or promotion, or honourable titles at such a moment; there was but one idea in her head, in her heart, on her lips, as she rocked herself back and forth where she sat.

'Tam, Tam! my little Tam! Haud a' your tongues, an' speak aboot naething but Tam!'

While the neighbours sat recalling what they could remember of the childish exploits of Lieutenant Gowans, another and very different scene was being enacted in the house of the convalescent Syme. There was not much doing at this time of the day; most of the boats were at sea, and the fishermen on shore were busy attending to their sea-gear. The old aunt who kept house for Bob had seized the opportunity to take a trip to Elie, leaving the house in apple-pie order, with nothing for the convalescent to do but pour out a dram and hold out his palm for the price of it, to whoever might come in to slake their thirst.

The excitement connected with the cliff affair had simmered down, leaving the public each with his or her own private opinion on the subject of Bob's silence thereanent.

Bob was sitting quietly smoking by the fire when a spruce young woman, sharp of eye and visage, but clear-complexioned and rather good-looking, suddenly stood before him and uttered the one word—

'Well!'

Bob started from his chair with a muttered curse, and looked towards the door; but the young woman instantly shut it, turned the key in the lock, and stood with her back against it.

'Are you going to fulfil your promise to me or not?' she demanded, with steady eyes.

'Hang the promise! Nae thanks to you if I'm no' a dead man the day,' was the sullen reply.

'You may be a dead man yet before the day

is out,' said the woman. 'It all depends on whether you keep your promise.'

'Tak' care I dinna lay your feet fast,' he muttered defiantly.

The woman laughed an ugly laugh

'*You* lay *my* feet fast! Are ye not convinced yet that I am in earnest when I tell ye that it's either marriage or death? Do you think I'll live to be disgraced by a—a—thing like *you?* You promised when I should return your letters you would marry me at once. I did so, like a fool, and what did I get for it? Nothing but jeers and gibes, till my very reason left me, and you know what came of that. This is your last chance now, though; either marry me this week, or I die in such a way as will throw the blame on you, and make you swing for it. There, take your choice. It's a desperate woman ye've to deal with, remember.'

There was resolution and firmness in every feature of the woman's face—in her eyes that gleamed like steel, in the tones of her voice, clear, distinct, and determined. They carried conviction to Bob for once; the girl whom he had pursued and flattered, and professed to love and promised to marry, had suddenly developed into a sharp-faced woman, made desperate by threatened ruin, and determined that he should share it, if ruin it must be.

Bob knocked the ashes out of his pipe meditatively, and he became paler even than his illness had left him.

'I'm sure ye see I'm no' a fit man to marry onybody the noo, Lizzie,' he said in a conciliatory tone.

'Why?'

'D'ye no' see I'm far frae weel yet? I'—

The woman stopped him with a gesture of impatient scorn.

'Fudge! The minister can come to the house, and you are able enough to say "Yes." That's all that's wanted. I don't care if I never saw your face again, but you shall marry me this week, or— Take your choice.'

'An' haud a' the toon lauchin' at me for bein' forced to marry a woman I didna want?' whined Bob.

'You'll be where you'll not hear what folks say if you refuse. Who is going to tell that, unless it be yourself? Do you think *I* am going to betray myself any more than you? Do you think I want folk to know that I had to come here and *ask* you to do me justice? Anyhow, I am your wife already by the old Scotch law, for I have a letter of yours where you signed yourself "husband" to me. I didn't return that one, by good luck.'

Bob fidgeted in his chair, and some muttered profanity escaped him.

'You needn't swear, Bob; you may as well give in first as last,' laughed the woman somewhat hysterically. The strain was beginning to tell on her, she appeared ready to break down; but Bob was too much absorbed weighing all the pros and cons of the question, as he stared into the ashes, to notice this. Euphie was gone, but then she might come back. But if she did, would she so much as look at him, now that this Lizzie had appeared, determined to expose him if he did not do her justice by marrying her?

He had been fond of Lizzie before he fancied Euphie, but he had never dreamed but that she would go her own way once she fully realised that she had been cast off—never dreamed but that she could be bought off as that other one had been. He was cornered, and he could see no way out of the corner but the one way she had indicated. Moreover, he had a profound conviction, from his recent experience of her, that she would carry out her threat if he did not promise once more by way of appeasing her.

'Aweel, Lizzie, I fancy what maun be, maun be. I'll marry ye, an' mak' an honest woman o' ye. That's what ye want, isn't it?'

'Thank ye—it's you that'll make yourself an honest man,' was the bitter retort.

'Aweel, then, ye'll hae to gang back to Edinburgh, an' when a' thing's ready I'll let ye ken, an' ye can come ower an' be marrit. Ye ken the cries maun be cried three Sabbaths i' the kirk.'

'No, thank ye, Mister Syme. I came here on an errand of life or death, and here I stay till my errand is done. Do you think I'm as simple a fool as I was when I mistook you for a man? No. The cries can be cried out on Sunday, and we'll be married on Monday morning. This is Friday—and here I stay in your house until I'm Mrs. Syme by law as well as by right.'

'Aweel, hae't a' your ain way the noo; but ance you're my wife, under my thoom, you go, madam,' said Bob, with impotent rage.

'Very well—we'll see,' said the woman, with a quiet smile. She was about to add something, when the door was shaken angrily.

'Wha the deevil has lockit this door—an' a' the rest o' the hoose left to the mercy o' the world?' muttered a voice without; and the strange young woman opened the door from within.

'Gudesake!' It was Bob's aunt returned from Elie, and her astonishment at this woman closeted in the bar with Bob was visible in her face.

'This is a bonny ongaun in a decent hoose,' she began; but the visitor smiled so graciously upon her that she felt mollified.

'It did look queer; but, ye see, I'm Bob's wife. We were privately married a while ago, but the proper wedding's to be on Monday, cried on Sabbath.'

The old woman's jaw fell, and she looked at Bob wildly.

'Is that railly true, Bob?'

'I fancy sae,' replied the unwilling bridegroom, without looking up.

The old woman's lip quivered, and a tear rose to her eye; but Lizzie laid her hand upon her shoulder hastily, and whispered,—

'But that will make no difference to you. I like you, and your place is at this fireside the same as ever. I'll be glad to have a woman in the house—a motherly woman like you.'

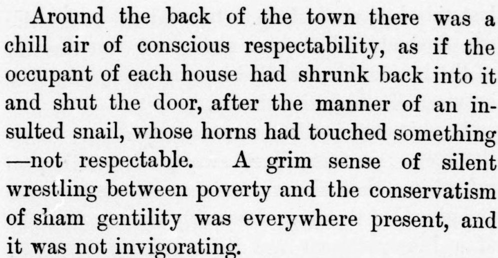
The two women went up-stairs and laid off their things amicably. Only too glad that she was not to be set about her business, the old woman became reconciled, and on Monday Bob became a Benedict, having caught a Tartar.

CHAPTER XVI.

BACK TO INWEERIE.

IT was five years after her departure e'er Euphie again set foot on the old Fife shore, conveyed thither by the boat from Leith to Anstruther. As she walked up the pier she looked around her, overcome by a feeling of strangeness. How queer and little and life-in-death-like the old stand-still place seemed to her after sojourning in the great cities. It was the common feeling of all who came back to the old places after a lapse of time. And yet, as she looked around, it was just the same as ever—the same as it had been ever since she could remember.

The burn still spread itself out thinly under the bridge, in an aimless sort of way drooling musically round the churchyard wall to the sea. Along the front street the same old loafers lounged in the vicinity of the frequent licensed grocery, every now and then disappearing into the open doors of such, in search of the only inspiration life now held for them. The stagnation was depressing. There was some little stir about the pier, where the steamer had come in, but it subsided with the unloading of her little cargo, and all was still again.



Around the back of the town there was a chill air of conscious respectability, as if the occupant of each house had shrunk back into it and shut the door, after the manner of an insulted snail, whose horns had touched something—not respectable. A grim sense of silent wrestling between poverty and the conservatism of sham gentility was everywhere present, and it was not invigorating.

Euphie longed for a sight of the hearty Inweerie fisher folk, with their petticoats kilted, their aprons tucked up at the side, their hair a-blown, and their mutches askew with the hustle and bustle of dipping the nets into the hot bark tan, of shelling the mussels and baiting the lines—too intent on the terribly practical business of life to bestow a thought on the worship of this all-compelling god of the mediocre—Respectability.

The railway had not yet crawled this far along the coast, so Euphie walked west next morning—setting out at the early hour of four, to the landlord's surprise and outspoken suspicion. She thought she would like to walk through the old place before any one was up this tempting summer morning. The green sward along the low road to the west of Pittenweem was pied with gowans; the braes were studded with violets and primroses; the whins were budding, the brackens putting forth their leaves; there was the creak and whiz and whirr of insect life in the grass, and the music of birds innumerable in the air. The crows had left the fields, and were strutting, intent on business, among the rocks, picking up what flotsam or jetsam the

last tide had washed up. Beyond the rocks, the sea, flushed with the sun rising red over the rim of the horizon, lay cradled in murmurous slumber between the opposite shores.

Euphie stood still a moment or two to enjoy the scene; it was all so sweet, so familiar, so refreshing, that she was fain to lift up her eyes and give God thanks. Presently she caught sight of a blue petticoat and little red tartan shawl among the rocks, and, watching, she saw that it was a woman with a creel in one hand and a knife in the other, gathering limpets.

'At this hour of the morning!' exclaimed Euphie to herself. 'I must go down and see who it is.'

She scrambled down over the brae and over the projecting ledges of rock until she reached the sand, and, lifting her skirts, she stepped over the pools and sprang from rock to rock as agilely as when a girl at the old school.

'Gathering limpets?' said Euphie to the stooping figure, who had not heard her approach.

With a great start, the woman turned and looked at her.

'Mary Scott! Is it really you, Mary?' cried Euphie gladly.

'Ay,' said the woman, in surprise; 'but ye've the better o' me. Od—eh—gude greatie!—you're no' Euphie Lyn, are ye?'

'I am indeed, Mary. How are you?'

'Fine. I'm fine, thank ye. I just left the bairns in their bed, an' cam' awa' east here to see an' get twa-ree lempets to bait the line.'

'Bairns, Mary! You're not married, surely?'

'Ay, I am that,' said Mary, with a happy laugh. 'I was marrit that year you gaed awa'. I've three bairns noo.'

'Well, well, well! Are you near through with your limpets? I want to go home with you, and see your bairns and your husband. Who did you marry?'

'Jamie Gowans. D'ye mind o' Tam Gowans, that ran awa' when he was a laddie at the schule? Aweel, a brother o' his.'

'And you're happy, Mary?' asked Euphie, with sudden wistfulness.

'Ay, 'deed, ay. Jamie has his ain way, like ither folk, but then I never thraw wi'm, an' he's aye gude to me an' the bairns.'

Mary's creel was about full, and Euphie laid hold of it to help her over the rocks; but she could scarcely lift it, it was so heavy. Mary protested she could carry it better herself, and hoisted it on her right side, resting the weight on her hip.

'Ye see, we're used to that,' she explained, as she crookedly took her way up through the rocks. 'Are ye come back to the toon, Euphie?'

'Yes, for a visit. Will you let me stay with you, Mary? Have you room?'

'I daursay I could gie ye a bed weel eneuch,' said Mary, scanning Euphie's mourning attire; 'but,' she said, with an uneasy laugh, 'ye maunna fling ony o's ower the brae.'

'How—what do you mean, Mary?' queried Euphie sharply; for, in spite of the assumed frankness, there was an indefinable chill in Mary's manner that hurt her.

'Oo, weel, ye ken, it's nane o' my business,'

answered Mary uneasily, 'but ye micht hae killed Bob that nicht.'

'Killed — Bob! What are you speaking about, Mary Scott?' demanded Euphie, coming to a full stop and facing the little woman sternly.

Mary looked at her in wonder. What had come to Euphie Lyn to make her look so lady-like, to make her 'speak English' like that? She was so taken up, so surprised at the straight figure, the quick flash in the eye, that she did not answer, and was about to pass on with her creel on her side; but Euphie took hold of it firmly, and Mary looked at her in some alarm.

'Look here, before we go another step, tell me what you mean.'

Mary hesitated, and then said—

'Od, did ye no' fling Bob Syme ower yonder, ae nicht i' the darkenin'? He was carrit hame for dead.'

Euphie stared at her wildly.

'Woman, do you know what you are saying? You must be stark mad! Lay down your creel, and tell me all about this thing before I go mad too.'

Mary had no choice. Euphie snatched the basket and deposited it upon the sand, and then and there Mary told her the whole story as she had heard it.

'And does that rascal dare to say that I threw him over the brae? Mary Scott, when I left home that day after dinner, I went straight along the high-road and on to St. Andrews. At the time you say Bob Syme was thrown over the cliff I was in St. Andrews, with the lady and gentleman I have lived with ever since.'

There was such conviction in Euphie's words and looks that Mary at once believed her. Moreover, this was no longer the Euphie Lyn she had formerly known; this was an educated, superior woman; her speech, her manner, her naturalness, were invested with an impalpable refinement which impressed Mary.

'Ye're in mournings, I see,' she said, with evident curiosity.

'Yes,' said Euphie sadly; 'my best friends are both dead—killed about a month ago in a railway collision. I may well mourn.'

Mary uttered a shocked 'Eh, is that possible?' and looked still more curious.

'Yes, I have spent five happy and instructive years since I left Inweerie, and it all came about so strangely. Whoever may doubt of a Divinity that shapes our ends, I don't—I can't.'

Mary stared, thinking what fine 'English' Euphie had learnt to speak since she had gone away.

'As I tell you, I was in St. Andrews that night. I had got within sight of the town, but was tired and hungry, and sat down on a pile of broken metal by the roadside to eat a biscuit and rest a little. Before I knew where I was, I fell sound asleep. I had had no sleep all the previous night, and what with trouble of mind and bodily fatigue, I suppose I had got overcome. Anyway, the first thing I knew was being wakened up by a gentleman shaking me soundly, and when I opened my eyes there was a carriage standing close by, and an old lady in it, clasping and unclasping her hands quite

excitedly, and crying, "Ach, mine Marguerite! mine Marguerite!"

'Of course I felt quite put out at being caught asleep, and couldn't understand what the old lady meant by calling me "Marguerite," but the gentleman explained afterwards that she had had a daughter who was dead, and that I bore such a remarkable resemblance to her that nothing would do but he must stop the carriage and waken me up. She asked me where I was going, and when I told her that I was looking for a situation, she hired me then and there, and drove me into St. Andrews to the furnished lodgings they had hired. It was a great risk I ran—I know that now, but I did not then; but God has been good to me, and I had fallen among good and kind people. The lady and gentleman were Dr. Hertzman and his mother,—German-English people, I might call them,—and he was travelling about in the interests of science.

'Well, to make a long story short, I found that the lady did not require my services in the way I had supposed,—there was no work to do in furnished lodgings,—but when I went with her to France, a fortnight later, she hired both French and English teachers for me, and she herself taught me German and music. All this under the pretence of making me a suitable companion for her! She insisted that I was the living image of her dead daughter, the same eyes, the same hair, and it seemed to be a comfort to her to have me with her. The doctor indulged his mother in all her whims, and we lived happily together. I told her my history,—part

of it, at least,—and we were on the way to Edinburgh from London when the accident happened which killed Dr. Hertzman instantaneously, and injured Madame so that she only lingered a few days. During that time I myself lay insensible from my injuries, and when I awoke to consciousness and to strength I was told that Madame and her son were both dead. Strange that she should meet her death on her way to make inquiries concerning me of Nannie Lyn!

'However, as soon as she knew she was dying, she sent for a lawyer, and left me a very comfortable little fortune, in the belief that somehow I must be her granddaughter.'

'Eh, the like o' that! An' ye'll be real weel-aff noo, then, Euphie? But, ye ken, Nannie Lyn left the toon just after you did. Naebody has ever heard tell o' her sin' syne.'

'Is that really so, Mary? Where can she have gone?'

'To the North country, they say.'

Euphie mused a little, and then said sharply, 'Ah well! But now let us get to Inweerie, so that I can put my foot on this lie of Syme's. Did anybody else believe that? Surely nobody would write away such a story as that.'

'I heard that Andrae Craig's mither wrote awa' to him what was bein' said.'

Euphie's heart died within her, but she said quietly—

'She will soon know better than that.'

'Eh, but she's dead,' said Mary solemnly.

There was a pause for a moment, and then Euphie queried painfully—

'Mary, do you really believe I did that?—that I could possibly do a thing like that?'

'No, no' noo, Euphie. But, ye ken, ye canna blame us. Ye ran awa', an' was never seen after that, an' Mrs. Lyn gaed awa', an' Bob Syme, that was aye sae daft aboot ye, marrit anither woman as sune as he was better,—ye couldna blame us. He never just said it was you, but he aye let on that way.'

'I'll make him tell the truth when I get there,' said Euphie firmly, and together they walked into the town. It was about half-past five, and few people were up yet, only one or two old fishermen were down on the pier-end pacing; sea-gulls were perched on the masts of the boats, and a few crows were pecking about in the empty harbour. But Euphie saw none of these; all the beauty of the morning had suddenly died out. Her heart was hot and surging with indignation at the scurvy fellow who had all these years darkened her name with the shadow of an attempted crime. She had been right, perfectly right, in her instinctive repugnance to him, and *this* was the man Nannie Lyn had determined she should marry!

As they turned a corner of the street they were suddenly greeted by three little children in their scanty shirts, wailing loudly, and calling, 'Mither, mither!' at the top of their shrill voices.

'Eh, look at that!' cried Mary, waving her fist threateningly at them. 'I'll cut every ane o' your heads aff. Ye're weel-aff, Euphie, that has nae bairns. Look, see, when they wauken up, an' me no' in the hoose, they just run oot as

they were born, greetin' for their mither, an' skirlin' like to bring in the toon.'

For the life of her Euphie could not resist laughing. She had been beginning to feel somewhat cool to Mary. The unthinking, inconsiderate way in which she had all but charged her with a crime had chilled the warmth of her first greeting, and she had already repented her desire to live with her while in Inweerie. Now, however, the sight of the children, the spare little body of the mother, bent with the heavy basket of bait she had to provide, the thought of her having to get up and leave her infants to do it, struck Euphie with compassion.

'Give me the basket, Mary,' she said, 'and do you take the baby up.'

'Me, I just think shame o' them. Come here, ye little deillies, till I murder ye;' and, stooping, Mary took up two of the naked cherubs, kissing them profusely, and with one in each arm marched into the house. As Euphie deposited the limpets at the door, a dapper, smart-looking fellow in sailor's uniform came swiftly up to the door, but seeing Euphie, started, and drew back with a respectful salute.

'Who is that?' asked Euphie, as she entered.

Mary looked out of the window at the trim figure in the pea jacket, and answered, with evident pride—

'Oh, that's my gude-brither. He cam hame the ither day. Ye mind o' Tam Gowans? That's Tam.'

CHAPTER XVII.

PIER-HEAD POLITICS.

IT was indeed Tam, home on furlough, having in consideration of long and special services been allowed a full year's absence in order to recruit his health, which had not been quite so robust of late.

Mrs. Gowans, with her sleeves rolled up, and a stout packsheet apron tied about her ample waist, had been down on her knees, with her back to the door, finishing off the usual Saturday scrubbing, when she was suddenly blindfolded from behind by two strong masculine palms laid across her eyes.

'Oh, Jamie, ye daft swine, g'wa!' she said good-naturedly. 'Wiser-like ye were helpin' your faither to pent the *Mornin' Star*. He's awa' doon the harbour wi' the tar-pat an' 'oor syne.'

There was no answer to this protest, nor did the hands relax their clasp across her brow.

'Tchck, tchck, Jamie! G'wa' wi' your capers,' she said, impotently trying to shake herself free. 'Shure's death, I think shame o' ye! If ye were a young man, I would mak' nae mervel, but you, wi' a wife an' three bairns,

gaun on like a perfect cuddy-ass. *Jamie!* I tell ye, let go.'

Thoroughly angry and disgusted now, she was trying to scramble to her feet, when a youngster who stood by enjoying this pantomime sang out shrilly—

'It's no' Jamie!'

'No' Jamie! Then wha is't?'

'It's — it's a gentleman wi' yellow buttons,' said the youngster.

'Guess,' said a baritone voice close to her ear.

Mrs. Gowans became suddenly still, and put up her hands. They came in contact with a curly beard and whiskers, a peaked cap, and a pair of little gold earrings, and her fingers trembled and shook.

'It's no' you, my laddie, is't? That's surely no' my little Tam?' she murmured in a shaking voice.

The hands released her, and she rose and turned, and saw a good-looking, middle-sized young man, bearded and whiskered, and arrayed in a smart navy-blue suit and officer's cap. But she could recognise nothing but the eyes, the roguish blue eyes, that shone as they watched her through a gathering film of tears.

'Mother!'

As she took a wild step towards him he threw his arms about her, and, fast locked in his embrace, the mother was compensated for all the weary years of longing and sore regret.

The home-coming of Lieutenant Tom Gowans was a red-letter day in the annals of the town. It took him some time before he got acquainted with all his brothers and sisters. His father sat

in the chair opposite him at the fireside, and smoked incessantly, looking at his son through the reek. They all expected no end of yarns; but Tom was no spinner, and when asked how he came to get on board a ship he declared he could not remember, it was so long ago. But of one thing he was certain, he had got there, and intended to stay there.

The neighbours one and all came to see him and claim old acquaintance.

Lieutenant Gowans felt it had been worth his while to run away and stay away for years, for the sake of getting such a hearty welcome home; but the discussion of his future gave him mingled amusement and annoyance.

'The next thing, ye'll hae to get a wife, Tam,' said a jolly, harum-scarum mother of many, named Shoosie.

'A wife! Whose wife?' queried Tom, with assumed innocence.

'Eh, ye blackgaird fine d'ye ken what I mean —ye canna tak' yer nap aff me. But,' pursued the monitor, with sudden, earnest solemnity, 'whatever ye dae, Tam, dinna marry a butterflee. A butterflee, min, is a' weel enough, but what's the use o' a butterflee amon' a curn bairns?'

'Him! What are ye speakin' aboot? Od, ye ken, he'll hae to get a leddy, nae less,' said another, with sly sarcasm.

'Na, na, Tam, my man. You tak' a cat o' your ain kind, an' she'll no' scart ye,' advised another.

The gallant lieutenant, unaccustomed to be thus discussed in his own presence, was beginning

to feel hot and uncomfortable, and in his helplessness glanced across the hearth at his father. Old Geordie, understanding the appeal in his son's eye, winked at him knowingly, and Tom began to feel less at the mercy of this high running sea of banter. He felt as if he had run up a signal of distress to his own mast-head and been answered, 'All right, I will stay by you.' He plucked up courage instantly, and, rising to his feet, said cheerily—

'Well, ladies, to please you, I'll tack and bear down on the pier-head. If I see any pretty girl cruising about, I'll keep my weather-eye upon her. Come along, father, you pilot me down.'

Old Geordie, to hide the gratified smile of fatherly pride which threatened to betray him, wiped his mouth with his ample red handkerchief, and, stuffing it into the crown of his sou'-wester, followed his son outside.

The woman who had been advising Tam anent matrimony slapped him heartily on the shoulder as he passed out, bawling after him—

'My faigs! ye're a braw, wise-like chield. I wuss I was a young cummer again; ye wouldna be lang single, my man.'

As soon as he was out of earshot, Lieutenant Gowans let off a round of nautical oaths, which refreshed him like a sneeze. His father swelled with admiration and respect; it was the finest swearing he had ever heard in all his life.

'I tell you, pilot, I can't stand these women's tongues. I don't mind mother, but when a flying Dutchman like that boards me I'd sooner be scudding close-reefed before the biggest hurricane

that ever blew. I can't get used to their lingo. Why don't they let a fellow alone?'

Old Geordie grinned sympathetically.

'Man, ye needna mind Shoosie,' he said. 'She's ane o' that kind that's either clockin' or gaun wi' birds a' the time, an' she thinks you're like hersel'. I never saw her yet but aye frae the bellows to the fore-hammer, as hard as she can lether. But there's waur folk than Shoosie for a' that. She's a gude wife an' a gude mither.'

The lieutenant rapped out one or two more anathemas on Shoosie and all her like, fairly perspiring as he thought of her and her matrimonial advices.

On the pier-head stood old Saunders, with a red striped nightcap on his head, and a pair of easy slippers on his feet, attired in the usual blue flannel suit, with a red kerchief tied about his neck, setting off his white whiskers finely. There were Thomas Mathers too, and several others, sedately pacing to and fro, as if life on the sea had instilled into them its restlessness.

Lieutenant Gowans had been down the day before, and renewed his acquaintance with them all, but he shook hands with Thomas Mathers again to-day. He had had a long chat with him the night before, much to their mutual satisfaction; for Thomas had in his youth been somewhat of a wanderer too, and their talk about the various Mediterranean ports had been interesting to both.

Evidently some interesting discussion had been interrupted by the arrival of Tom and his father; for the conversation, which had been animated,

had suddenly stopped. Lieutenant Gowans, for all he was a fellow-townsman, was as yet a stranger to some—at least, the feeling of strangeness had not sufficiently worn off for familiarity. Tom had wit keen enough to see this, and made an effort to overcome it.

'What's the matter with your hand?' he inquired of a man whose wrist was bound up in cloth.

'Oo,' quoth old Saunders, 'he was shakin' hands wi' Sir Aulexander, an' he shook it oot' o' joint.'

There was a burst of laughter at this sarcastic sally, which made the lieutenant turn to Saunders inquiringly.

'Ye see,' continued the old salt slyly, 'Sir Aulexander's gaun aboot lookin' for votes the noo, an' I'm expeckin', by the time he gets through, we'll a' be sittin' on the pier-end here, ilka ane wi' his airm in a sling. He wantit to shake hands wi' me, but I keepit my hand i' my pooch, an' tell't him I had a bealed thoomb.'

The lieutenant understood the raillery now; and Thomas Mathers smiled grimly.

'Ay, min, it's wonderfu' what a sudden affection the gentry develop for folk they dinna care a brass farden for just aboot election-time.'

'Yes, I suppose so,' responded Tom, who had been out the way of politics all his life.

'The last elections we were promised everything. Oor member was gaun to dae wonders. He was gaun to get a new pier till's, so we could get in here wi' safety in a coorse day, an' when he got into Parliament that was the last we heard o't.'

'Oo'll build a pier oorsel's, an' *that* for the Government!' said Jamie Scott, snapping his fingers defiantly; 'an' the fisherman that would vote for laws to aloo a landlord to come doon here an' collect teinds,—tak' every tenth fish we catch, and forbid us to lift a saumon, though they were swarmin' thick ayont the rocks there, on penalty o' a fine,—the man that would vote for a member pledged to uphaud Tory laws like thae —weel, I wouldna let him sail in *my* boat. It's no the man, it's his principles I look at.'

'Ay, that's it, Jamie,' said Thomas Mathers. 'Stick to the principles. A man's here the day an' awa' the morn; but a principle that has justice an' truth in't is eternal. An' the principle I haud to is this, that the earth was made for man,—no' ae man, or twa men, or three men, or for ony limited number o' men, but for *mankind*, —for the human race,—an' I would like to ken wha ga'e ony man the richt to come doon here an' claim ony pairt o' my earnin's to put into his ain private pooch. Man, the meanest beggar that comes singin' through the toon for bawbees is no' half as mean as the landlord that comes claimin' every tenth fish frae a puir fisherman.'

'Aweel, sirse,' said Saunders, 'oo'll jist hae to dae as oor forbears did i' the time o' the wutches—*tak' the thing in your ain hand.* Ye ken lang-syne, when they were wutches, for every wutch that was fand the folk were taxed to pay ten pound. An' the minister, he aye fand oot the tither wutch an' the tither wutch, an' aye there was the tither ten pound to pay. By gosh, the folk got tired o' this wark, an' they turned an' said they wouldna pay anither bawbee

for a' the wutches the de'il ever possessed. So they made a law that for every wutch a minister fand oot he should pay ten pound oot o' his ain pooch. *That* ended wutchcraft, for sin' that gude day there was never a wutch heard tell o' on this coast.'

A laugh and ripple of applause went round; and, thus encouraged, Saunders resumed, after taking in a reef of his nightcap, whose tassel during this recital went swinging back and forth at a lively rate—

'An' what better are we noo? If it's no' wutches, it's aye some ither thing oo've to pay for. Oo pay for keepin' up roads for the gentry to ride on, but de'il a road hae we for oorsel's. We're taxed for this and for that, but when we get doon on oor knees and petition for some o' oor ain siller back again to improve oor harbour, oo get nihil naething. You're just puir fishers; but, ye ken, they're the saut o' the earth, an' though they neither tile nor spin, Solomon in a' his glory was never daickered up like them. But, by gosh, I'll claw a whiter tap yet afore I vote for onybody that gies their countenance to interdickin' honest folk that's willin' to pay the leeshins to Government frae catchin' saumon oot o' the sea. A bonny story!'

'Bob Syme's gaun to vote for Sir Aulexander,' said a fisherman.

'If that was a' the ill he did it would maitter little,' said Thomas Mathers; 'but I think it's a black shame he should be alloo'd to pit sic a disgrace upon an innocent woman.'

'What's that?' demanded Tom Gowans, turning round sharp.

'Garrin' folk believe that Euphie Lyn threw him ower the brae.'

'Get out, Mathers!'

'It's a fact. She gaed to him an' insisted on him clearin' her o' sic an imputation, but he would neither say Ay nor No, just let her hing i' the head o't.'

'Look here; you know I was away, and didn't hear of the circumstances, though I have heard something of the kind since I came home. Tell me the whole thing, Mathers.'

The whole story was related to Tom; and for the first time, too, the fishermen now heard the inner story of Euphie's persecution by Mrs. Lyn, and what was the real cause of her flight.

'Look here,' said Lieutenant Gowans. 'H'm, let me see. To-night, at eight o'clock, I invite you all to come to Syme's. I'll pay. Only, don't one of you speak of this business; just look and listen, and you shall see our pretty private theatrical performance.'

So saying, Lieutenant Gowans left the pier-head and steered straight along the low road to Pittenweem.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TOM PLAYS HIS PART TO ADVANTAGE.

AT the hour appointed all who had been on the pier-head swung along leisurely in the direction of Bob Syme's shop. Bob himself, neat as a pin, was in unusually brisk spirits as he saw the men come dropping in, and he went into the back cellar and drew off an extra flagon in anticipation of an extra demand. The men did not at once ask for their whisky, but sat down at the long table and stretched their legs under it upon the sanded floor, and began talking on the coming elections.

'Weel, what'll ye have?' said Mrs. Syme, appearing in the doorway with an air of authority.

'Yersel', 'ooman — yersel',' quoth Saunders, with clumsy wit.

'Bob 'll sair's,' said Jamie Scott, with quiet dignity, immediately resuming his conversation with Thomas Mathers.

Mrs. Syme flounced off in a high huff, the lace strings of her fancy white mutch flying far behind her.

'Better go in an' see what thae fishers want,' she said, with a snap.

'Time enough,' said Bob, emerging from the back shop.

There were some footsteps in the passage, and, turning, Mrs. Syme beheld a gentleman in full naval uniform, with one or two medals on his breast, and accompanied by a policeman, enter the room where the fishermen sat.

'Here, sir—here!' she exclaimed, darting out upon them. 'Come into the best parlour; thae's just fishers sittin' there.'

'Oh, thank you, ma'am, this will do very well,' remarked the lieutenant, with a sly wink to the company. 'I don't mind rubbing clothes with a fisherman once in a while.'

'But, dear me, it's far mair comfortable in here—for the like o' you,' she said, with visible deference and open admiration of the good-looking lieutenant.

'Mr. Syme within?' he inquired.

'Yes, sir,' answered Bob, who appeared behind his wife with his eyes full of interrogations.

'Bring in twa mutchkin o' yer best, Bob,' shouted Saunders, with that levelling familiarity which Mrs. Syme hotly resented.

'And you'll come in and let us hear how the elections are coming on, *Mr.* Syme?' said the lieutenant, with another wink at the company.

'Wi' the greatest o' pleasure, sir;' and, with cheerful alacrity, Bob fetched the liquor and glasses, while the policeman and the lieutenant took seats at the table.

As soon as they were all seated, and had begun to serve out the liquor, Lieutenant Gowans turned the key in the lock and put it in his pocket. Then he turned to the policeman.

'Have you got the necessary documents?'

'Yes, sir,' said the policeman, a big heavy man, who looked hard at Bob as he produced a big blue envelope, with 'On Her Majesty's Service' printed conspicuously outside. Out of this, the lieutenant with grave dignity drew a sheet of paper, also blue and formidable-looking, and with some printed letters along the top.

'Now, then,' said the lieutenant in his most impressive sea-baritone, 'Robert Syme, tavern-keeper of the town of Inweerie, Fifeshire, Scotland, son of the late John Syme, you will require to answer some questions here. Stand up.'

'What—what's the meanin' o' this?' demanded Bob, turning wan, and beginning to tremble.

'You are here to answer questions, not to ask them,' said the lieutenant curtly, and flashing a wink at the policeman. The man put his hand back into his coat-pockets and drew forth a pair of handcuffs, which clinked ominously.

'Now, Robert Syme, first you will swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, s'help you, Bob. Kiss *that*.'

Mr. Syme, now visibly alarmed, took the book which the lieutenant produced, and raised it to his lips.

'Now, then, I am informed that you have made an accusation against Miss Euphemia Lyn of this town. This means banishment for life, either for her or for you, unless the whole truth and nothing but the truth be told. You, Robert Syme, do declare before these witnesses,' continued the lieutenant, writing rapidly, and with impressive unction, 'that Miss Euphemia

Lyn threw you over the cliff?' Here he paused a moment to look at Bob, who stood staring at him with wild apprehension. 'Of course you will have to prove all this in a Court of Justice, for the lady is prepared to carry this to the House of Lords if necessary'—

'Hech, hech, min! By faigs, Bob, ye'll better tak' care what ye say, my man,' interrupted Saunders, fairly carried off his feet by the excitement of the moment.

The lieutenant drew his hand across his mouth slowly and stroked his beard before resuming. 'You said that she threw you over the cliff on'—

'I never said sic a thing!' exclaimed Bob.

The pen dropped from the lieutenant's fingers, and his arms fell limply by his side, as he bent back in his chair and stared at Bob.

'What?' he shouted.

'No, I never,' repeated Bob, gathering courage. 'An' what's mair, she didna.'

'Mr. Syme,' said Lieutenant Gowans, with judicial sternness, 'you will gain nothing by stating what is not true. Take care; you are perjuring yourself, sir.'

'I'm no'; as shure's death I'm no'!' protested Bob. 'I tell ye she didna. I never saw Euphie Lyn that day ava.'

'Ah-h'm!-h'm!-h'm!' coughed the lieutenant, clearing his throat with sonorous dignity. 'Ah, policeman, you will do your duty.'

The policeman proceeded to adjust the handcuffs on Bob, who was now pale as death, when the lieutenant held up his hand.

'Wait a little; don't put him in irons for a

jiffy yet; he will have to sign a paper first. Just stand there on guard.'

'Govey Dick!' exclaimed Saunders, 'ye're nabbit noo, my lad.'

The rest of the fishermen, resting their elbows on the table, turned and gazed at Bob with excited interest. They had promised to be still and look on, but they had not been prepared for a scene like this.

'I tell ye, sir, it wasna her; it wasna Euphie Lyn ava; it was some ither body,' reiterated Bob, in mortal terror.

'But when the lady came to you, you persisted that it *was* her, did you not?'

'No, I didna; I never said a word—neither Ay nor No.'

'Why?'

Bob did not answer.

'Speak up, you infernal coward, or I'll clap you in irons, with bread and water for a week,' barked the lieutenant, for a moment forgetting himself in his righteous indignation.

'She kent hersel',' said Bob, in weak extenuation. 'She kent she neither shoved me ower, nor took my watch.'

'And will you swear before God and these witnesses to that?'

'I will; it's God's truth.'

'Then *who* was it? Do you know?'

'Ay, ower weel,' answered Bob resignedly.

'Then it will be necessary to put the whole blamed thing in writing, with the name of the person who really did it, and also took your watch.'

In the most abject alarm Bob sank down upon

his chair, and, glancing stealthily at the door, whispered huskily—

'Man, I wouldna get a dowg's life o't if I tell't on her. She's a perfect deevil. I micht as weel droon mysel' at ance.'

'Let him aff, let the puir wretch aff,' whispered Thomas Mathers, reaching over to the back of the lieutenant's chair.

Old Saunders, as if an idea had just struck him, brought his hand down with a sounding slap upon his thigh, exclaiming under his breath—

'By gosh!'

The rest of the men looked at one another and at the policeman with sudden illumination, and a feeling of pity for Bob began to grow on them. The lieutenant forgot his assumed *rôle*, and uttered a long low whistle. Presently, however, he drew himself up again, and with his most judicial air said—

'Oh, well, if that's the way the land lies, mum's the word. And I will not prosecute any further if you will just, in the presence of these witnesses, sign a paper to the effect that you never saw Miss Euphemia Lyn on that day; that she neither took your watch nor pitched you over the rock; and that you, on the contrary, have the highest respect for the young lady.'

'*She* has the watch,' whispered Bob, pointing over his shoulder with his thumb. 'I ga'e *her* the watch, thinkin' to pacify her; that was what garred her throw me ower.'

'I doot she'll kaim your head for this,' said Jamie Scott, speaking for the first time; 'but ye deserve naething better after you lettin' on a'

the time that an innocent woman was a thief an' tried to murder ye.'

The lieutenant was writing swiftly. When on board his ship, Tom as a lad had spared no pains to improve himself when he saw promotion in the wind, and he had come to be quite a clever penman.

'Now, sign this,' said he peremptorily.

Bob looked at the paper suspiciously, and began to scratch his head.

'Very well,' said the lieutenant. 'Policeman, you go and call in Mrs. Syme, and arrest her on the complaint of her husband for the crime of'—

Bob laid hold of the policeman's arm abjectly.

'No, no; onything but that! She would tak' my sweet life if she thocht I tell't on her.'

'Then what the deevil way dinna ye sign the dockymint?' demanded the policeman brutally.

Bob made for the pen which the lieutenant had thrown down, and wrote his name at the end without so much as reading it.

'Now, you all sign as witnesses.'

All signed with the exception of Saunders.

'Na, na, ye'll no' catch me pittin' pen to paper; but I'll bear witness—nae fears but I'll bear witness. My tongue 'll no' be i' my pooch aboot this for mony a gude day.'

The lieutenant unlocked the door, and, opening it, called for Mrs. Syme.

'A bottle of your best wine, Mrs. Syme,' he called, and as she entered with it he looked at her, as they all did, with new interest.

'Eh, hech, hech!' muttered Saunders.

'Now, we'll drink health and prosperity to the

lady whose good name has been restored here to-day,' said Tom.

'Here's to ye, Tam, an' to her too. There's nae sayin' whaur a blister may licht,' quoth Jamie Scott.

The policeman drank his wine and slipped out.

'Are—are you no' frae Cupar?' gasped Bob, staring hard at the lieutenant, who had suddenly dropped the official manner he had assumed for this practical joke.

'Cupar? No. But I am Lieutenant Gowans of the *Bellerophon*, and if you've got any quarrel with me, just step out to the street, and these gentlemen will see fair play done.'

'Tam Gowans!' exclaimed Bob, and there was just the slightest intonation of contempt in the tone, which did not escape the quick ear of the lieutenant.

'Yes, Tam Gowans, you contemptible, cowardly duffer! And if you say one word out of joint about this business, I'll have you up for perjury. I'll teach you to slander a woman to save your own skin. Tam Gowans! Yes, Tam Gowans has nothing to be ashamed of; and take care he doesn't mop the lee scuppers with you.'

The door opened suddenly, and Mrs. Syme entered, with her face ablaze and her arms akimbo.

'Oot o' this! March!' she said in a still, concentrated voice, pointing her husband to the door; and Bob meekly rose and obeyed.

'Noo, what's all this?' she demanded, as soon as he disappeared.

'Is it necessary for you to know?' asked the lieutenant.

'That's none o' your business. I want to know what all this is about.'

'Very well, then, madam,' said the lieutenant coolly, and he placed the paper Bob had just signed upon the table, and told her to read it.

She had scarce got half through with it when she clutched it suddenly; but the watchful lieutenant's iron grasp on her wrist soon made her drop the document.

'No, you don't,' he said, putting it into his pocket with one hand, while with calm strength he held her off with the other.

The baffled woman, in a tearing rage, dashed out of the room in pursuit of her husband; and the party left the house, Saunders declaring he had never seen the like since Wombwell's Menagerie.

'Hoo on earth did ye get the policeman?' inquired Thomas Mathers, as Tom and he went up the brae together.

The lieutenant laughed, and jingled some change in his pocket.

'Nothing easier,' he said.

'Aweel, laddie, for Euphie's sake I'm glad ye've scotched that coward lee. I said at the time there was something ahint a' that, an' noo my suspicions are confirmed. Will ye gang wast to your brither's an' tell her hoo ye've gotten the truth oot o'm at last, or will I gang? She maun be tell't at ance, for she's just breakin' her heart ower the slander.'

'Oh, I'll go,' said Lieutenant Tom hastily.

Thomas smiled sagely, and bade him good-night.

CHAPTER XIX.

'A GOOD SMART WALK FROM HERE.'

THOMAS MATHERS had aptly described Euphie's state of mind when he said she was breaking her heart over the slander which Syme had allowed to go on unchecked all these years. For, while there were a few who had scouted the idea of Euphie being guilty either of the one crime or the other, the majority found it easier to take it for granted; besides, it was now remembered that Nannie Lyn had once or twice referred to her daughter as a girl of quick temper and stubborn will. And when people speak that way of their own, there must be some good grounds for it, said the village sages. Again, if she hadn't been guilty, why did she run away, bringing all that trouble on Nannie Lyn, who herself had to leave the town, unable to bear up under the disgrace?

The story, indeed, had been in a fair way to be forgotten, when Euphie, happily unconscious of all that had happened in her absence, appeared in the town and revived the whole story.

Euphie, quick-witted and sensitive naturally, and rendered still more so by five years of cul-

ture and intimacy with refined and intellectual people, saw the doubt in their eyes as they spoke to her, even when they most sedulously sought to veil it under a flood of friendly questions as to her welfare. She saw the distrustful caution melt and disappear in her presence as she talked to them; for, in spite of themselves, as they looked at her pale, expressive face, framed in the rich coils of her flaxen hair, at the wistful longing in her clear dark eyes, at the finely-developed figure set off in the neat-fitting black dress; above all, as they listened to her gentle speech, making kindest inquiries for all the old acquaintances, it seemed to them monstrous that such a woman could do such a thing. Some, indeed, came away from her declaring they didn't believe it; and if they did or whether she did it or no—they liked her—there!

Euphie was grateful for their kindness, for the way they strove to hide their distrust, but none the less it wounded her almost to the death.

On the day after her arrival she had called on Mr. Syme, and indignantly demanded an instant retraction of the slander; but Bob, with his sharp-visaged wife looking on, stood leaning his back against the counter, with his hands deep in his trousers-pockets, refusing point-blank to open his lips on the subject. In fact, he took a certain grim delight in seeing the woman who had slighted him, who had run away rather than marry him, thus brought to sue to him for the restoration of her good name. When he saw her gentle, refined beauty, her self-possessed, ladylike manner, and thought how she might

have been his instead of this virago who held him so mercilessly under her thumb, he felt glad for once to be master of the situation where a woman was concerned.

'I'll neither say Ay nor No,' was all the answer she could get from him; and, alas! the only ones who could have proved an *alibi* were beyond all mortal strife.

'Will you not use your influence with your husband to do me justice?' she said, turning in desperate appeal to his wife, who stood regarding her with jealous curiosity. But the sharp face only grew sharper, the suspicious wife shook her head negatively, and, tossing it high, left the room.

'Do you really mean to say that you will not speak the truth, and clear me of this abominable charge?' she demanded once more, her pale face flushing with impotent anger at the cool, insolent lout standing before her.

'I'll say naething,' he reiterated easily.

'Then you are a cowardly, contemptible wretch,' she burst out, forgetting herself as she bitterly realised how a person actually beneath contempt may yet have power to hurt and injure. It had never before occurred to her that though not every one is worthy to be a friend, no one is too insignificant to be an enemy—that poison is no less poison for its source being the tongue of a reptile.

She passed out of the shop, feeling herself baffled and defeated, her inner consciousness availing her little in presence of Bob Syme's silent innuendo.

She had gone home to Mary Scott's, and sent

for Thomas Mathers, to whom she poured out her bitter complaint. It was in vain that both he and Mary protested against taking the thing to heart; she would not be comforted or appeased. Yet—what could be done? The only friends who could have proved her innocence were dead; there was nothing for her but to bear it.

'But I will not leave the town until the truth is found out somehow. I *cannot* rest under the monstrous charge of being a thief and an attempted murderer. I shall take a house, and stay here in the town until I ferret this thing out,' she declared. But she had not from that day gone outside the door.

Tom Gowans, hearing that Euphie was staying at his brother's house, had shyly avoided going there; nevertheless, he found himself thinking frequently of the pleasant face he had seen that early morning as he passed his brother's door. And the more he kept away, the more he wanted to go; but he could not conquer the shyness that seemed to overcome him in the company of women. He did not mind the rattling, easy-going neighbours who frequented his mother's house, but he felt here was another style of woman altogether, and he had not forgotten the calm, critical look with which she had 'taken him in' that morning.

Now, however, he had a message, a very important message, to deliver to her—a message which he felt he would like to present in person.

Mary Scott had given up to Euphie the little room which was a sort of parlour and best bed-room combined, and here the lieutenant was

proudly ushered in and introduced to Euphie by his sister-in-law.

'I've to gang doon to the shop, for bread an' that, to fill Jamie's kit for the morn's mornin',' she explained to them both; 'but ye can sit an' crack there till I come back. The bairns are a' i' their beds sleepin'.'

The lieutenant felt a slight embarrassment at being left alone in the company of this quiet but decidedly attractive young woman; but she soon put him at his ease by saying, with a smile—

'Do you know, Lieutenant Gowans, I remember quite well your going away from home? I can recall the feeling of awe that crept over me when I thought of you away, far away somewhere, without any home or father or mother. Indeed, I am not sure but what I had a little cry all to myself over that poor little boy.'

Tom laughed, and flicked a speck of dust off his knees.

'That's one advantage of being a small youngster. A woman would cry for a fellow then; now a poor sinner has to rough it out all by himself.'

Euphie suddenly began to wonder what had brought the lieutenant here.

'I suppose you like to talk about school-days?'

'Oh yes, very much, very much. I remember every one. And the old master, too, what an easy-going old chap he was, to be sure! And how many are amissing!—some in the churchyard west by, some lying in the sea, others married, with families growing up about them; it makes a fellow feel old.' Tom was getting on bravely.

He began to enjoy sitting opposite this old schoolmate with the bright eyes and yellow hair. 'Some have gone off, too, like you and me; and, on the whole, they've all turned out fairly well. Not many black sheep among them—only one or two that I know of.'

A sudden chill came over Euphie. She wondered if he thought *she* was one of the few black sheep.

'You know—at least you will remember—Bob Syme?' Tom remarked.

'Yes,' said Euphie faintly.

'What do you think of *that* fellow, now?'

Euphie turned white, but she answered, with sudden sternness—

'I would rather not say, Lieutenant Gowans.'

'What are you afraid of?' he retorted, making a dash at the business on hand. 'You see, Miss Euphemia, Thomas Mathers told me all about the lies that fellow has been making all the town believe, so I tackled him to-night, and here's what I got out of him by a little bluff and bluster. I made him believe I was some of Her Majesty's lord high admirals come down to take his sworn affidavy about the business.'

The lieutenant spread out before Euphie the paper which they all had signed in the public-house, and she read it with wondering eyes.

'Lieutenant Gowans, how did you get him to speak the truth? I pleaded almost on my knees to him to clear me of this odious slander, and he only sneered at me—refused to open his mouth.'

'Oh, I had a great lark with him—scared him out of his seven senses, and finally got him to let the cat out of the bag. He told us more than

you see in there. It was his wife who tipped him over on his beam ends. He had given her his watch, but it seems it wasn't the watch but himself she wanted, so in a rage she pitched him overboard.'

'Good gracious!' cried Euphie, in unfeigned horror. 'But why, then, did he marry her after?'

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders and grinned.

'These are private concerns, I'm afraid,' he answered.

Euphie read the document over again. Yes, it was a complete and absolute denial of her having any connection with the affair, in any shape or form whatever, and this he had admitted in presence of all these men whose names were signed under his own. A slight flush dyed Euphie's cheek as she looked at Tom's smiling face.

'How shall I ever repay you for this, lieutenant?' she said, and in spite of herself her eyes filled and her lips trembled. 'You know it was nothing to me in a way—I knew my own innocence; but it was so hard to think the folk here should look on me with a kind of abhorrence. It—it has almost done for me.'

She paused a moment to control herself, and then she added—

'I shall never forget your kindness,—to a stranger, too,—and it was so unexpected, so kind of you to defend me like this.'

'Nonsense, nonsense! the best fun I've had since I came home. I thought first of giving him a walloping with a rope's end, but I mightn't

have walloped the truth out of him, you see; and as that was the main thing, I thought I'd play this trick on him. It served the purpose just as well, and as for punishment—poor devil, he's punished enough with yon wife. She'll comb his hair for him.'

The evening wore on blithely after that. It was as if a great cloud had dispersed, and sunshine once more gladdened her world. Mary came back and found them still talking, Euphie in such gay spirits that she must needs remark on it. Mary's exclamations when she heard the truth at last were a treat to hear. She suddenly remembered that she had forgotten something in the grocery, and she flew back on eager feet to tell them the news. But they had already heard it. Old Saunders had peregrinated high and low, up and down, retailing Lieutenant Gowans' trick, and how he had compelled Bob Syme to confess, and now the revulsion of sympathy to Euphie was overwhelming. All next day the neighbours from near and far came in to tender their sympathy, and Euphie was happy.

'But I must be up and away somewhere,' she said to Tom, about a week after this. 'There is nothing for me to do here, and I cannot think of living in idleness. I couldn't—I should go mad without something to do.'

The lieutenant looked grave; he was not prepared for this. The happiest week he had ever known in his life had been the last one, spent chiefly in her company. They had both been away for a longer or shorter time, and what more natural than that Lieutenant Gowans should ask her to go over the old places of

interest in the vicinity? What more natural than that he should drop into his brother's house of an evening? or, when he had gone home for the night, that he should sit smoking and gazing into the fire long after the old folks had gone to bed?

'Why can't you be content to stay here?'

'I couldn't; I would rust. I thought of going to Leven, where I might hire a house, and take a limited number of pupils in French and German.'

'Ah Leven?—that's a good smart walk from here,' said the lieutenant thoughtfully.

CHAPTER XX.

ALAS FOR TAM!

IT was an easy matter to rent and furnish a house in a pleasant locality, to put a brass plate on the door, thus—*Miss Hertzman, Teacher of French and German* (Hertzman being the name she had adopted in deference to Madame Hertzman's dying wishes), but it was another thing to get pupils. People who were well-to-do were chary of sending their children to a stranger who had only a sweet face and ladylike manners to recommend her; but Euphie could afford to wait. She wrote to her old governess in Paris, and from her received a certificate so laudatory of her accomplishments that she at last succeeded in getting six pupils, which was all she wanted. Before long, indeed, she was besieged by others, anxious to profit by such a capable teacher; but she kept to her limit.

Now, it so happened that about this time Lieutenant Gowans, wearying of the monotony of Inweerie, made the acquaintance of the chief of the coastguardsmen stationed at Leven, so there was nothing extraordinary in his frequent visits to that thriving town. Nor did it strike Euphie as at all singular that, when he came to

see his friend the coastguardsman, he should also drop in to chat a little with herself, bringing with him the news, glad or sad, from Inweerie.

No week passed in which he did not come twice at least, and as he walked all the way, and was sometimes tired, it was but civility on the part of the coastguardsman to offer him a bed; when, of course, he would show up again next day. But the shrewd Mrs. Gowans saw that a change had come over her 'Tam.' He was much quieter, his step was slower, his rollicking moods of fun and jest became fewer and fewer, he grew more grave and reticent.

Even Euphie noticed how gentlemanly and dignified the lieutenant was becoming, how very much quieter than when first she knew him. He had been at home four months now, and Euphie, what with her gratitude for his manly defence of her good name, and what with her admiration for himself, had conceived a genuine friendship for him.

They had begun to wax quite confidential with each other—he telling her all his adventures, his hopes, and ambitions; she informing him of her relations with Madame and her son, Dr. Hertzman, and of the request that with the legacy she should take their name.

'I wish I had not known of that big legacy,' said Tom suddenly.

'Why?' Euphie asked, in surprise.

'Oh, I don't know,' said Tom. 'Money seems always to separate people, somehow. I shall always be thinking what a rich woman I am talking to not to my old schoolfellow of Inweerie.'

'What nonsense, lieutenant! Friendship is

friendship, and money or the lack of it has nothing whatever to do with it,' protested Euphie earnestly.

'Are you quite sure of that?' asked Tom, looking hard at her.

'Quite sure, lieutenant,' she replied, returning his inquiring gaze with clear, unembarrassed eyes.

There was a silence after this; but presently the lieutenant rose, and, walking over to the window, looked out upon the sea. Between him and the hazy opposite shore the ships sailed up and down the Forth as is their wont, some brown fishing-boats were making for the harbour over the calm and shimmering blue, and altogether the day was warm and fine. Still, such days were common enough at this season, and the scene he looked upon was not so unfamiliar that he should contemplate it so intently.

Euphie was knitting a little fancy stocking for Mary Scott's baby, and she too seemed intently occupied with her own thoughts. After a space, however, she spoke—thinking aloud, more than anything else.

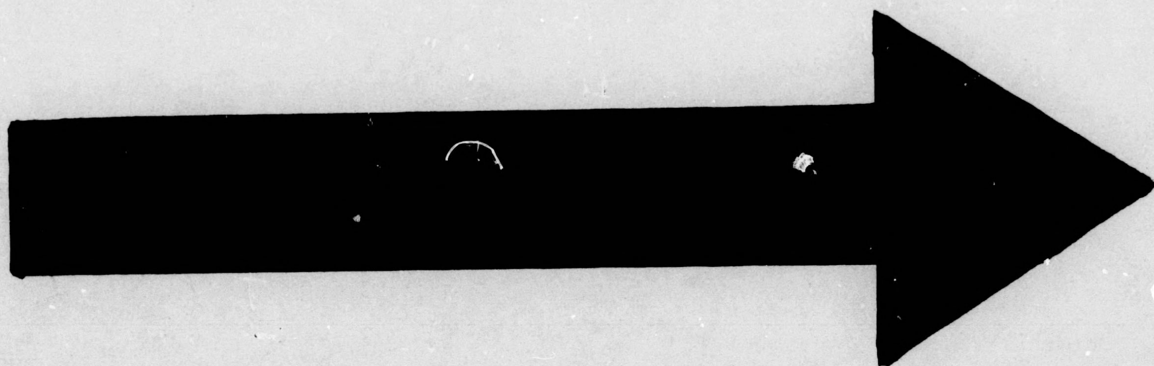
'No, I cannot help it; but I am not a bit changed in my nature—that is, from that afternoon in which I ran off in desperation from Inweerie.'

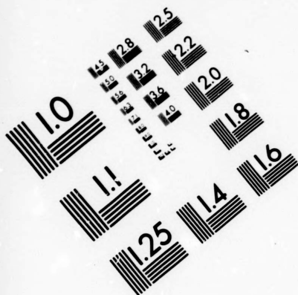
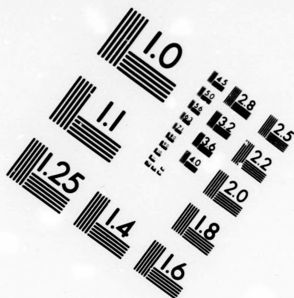
'By the by—I was always going to ask you, if it be a fair question—was it really from Syme you ran away?' asked Tom, turning from the window and resuming his chair opposite hers.

'Well, yes, chiefly that; but I had also found out that Nannie Lyn was not my mother'—

'Not your mother!' exclaimed Tom.

'No. I forgot; of course you know nothing



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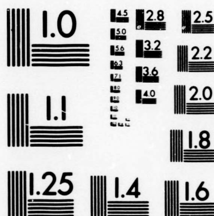
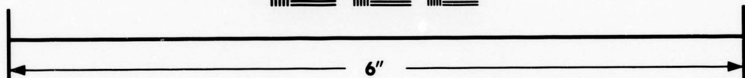

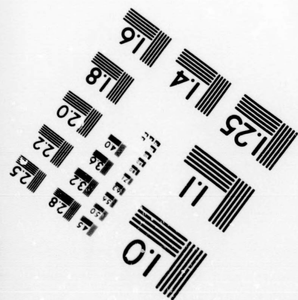
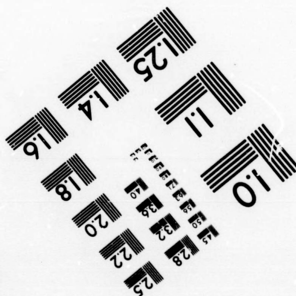

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of all that, lieutenant. Well, I must tell you. Surely you cannot think I could have left my mother, no matter what her faults?'

'I left mine,' grinned Tom.

'Ah, but you were a little thoughtless boy, and a very independent and plucky one at your age. But I was a grown-up young woman, capable of consideration and thought, and—But I will tell you all about it.'

Thereupon she repeated to him the story Thomas Mathers had told her concerning her parentage, to Tom's unbounded astonishment and wonder.

'Then you were more in my line, after all?' he said cheerfully.

'And when Mrs. Lyn insisted upon my marrying yon creature, knowing all the time she had no authority whatever, not being my mother, well, I rebelled and left her.'

'And jolly right you were, too,' assented Tom warmly.

'You think I did right, then, lieutenant?' asked Euphie, with an inner light kindling in her eyes.

'I say you pointed due north,' Tom responded, without hesitation.

'I wonder what you would say if you knew the whole story? Mrs. Lyn did worse than that, even. I could forgive her anxiety for me to marry a man I hated, but not for coming in between me and the man I loved.'

'Eh!—what's that?' queried Tom, with an unpleasant start.

'Did you never hear, Tom—did none of them ever mention me in connection with Andrew Craig?'

'Oh, Andrew that went to Australia? Well, now, I recall some bit of gossip about you and he being lad and lass at school, but I understood that was all over long before he went away.'

The lieutenant spoke in an easy, unconcerned tone, but the expression of keen, pained interest on his face he could not hide.

Fortunately, Euphie was not looking at him at all; her eyes were intent on the stocking she was knitting.

'You seemed to doubt my friendship a while ago,' she said, with a pitiful, appealing smile. 'I am going to prove how much I think of you, and how highly I prize your friendship, by confiding to you a hidden chapter of my heart's history.'

'Certainly, certainly,' said Tom irrelevantly.

'Ever since I had been a little girl at school I think I was as fond of him as a girl could be.'

'Quite right and proper.'

'And somehow, when we grew up, it was always the same. You know the fashion, as it always has been, how they walk up into the country in the summer Sunday evenings? Andrew walked with no one but me, and I walked with no one but him. Then Mrs. Lyn took it into her head that I should marry Syme, and he began to come to the house of evenings, and how it all happened I know not yet, but a coolness came between Andrew and me, and he pretended to take up with Mary, your sister-in-law; but Mary assures me there was never anything whatever between them. I think he had heard of Syme, and was angry. Then, when he had gone away, I found that Mrs. Lyn had

been at the bottom of it all; and I found she had kept back a letter he had sent asking me to meet him. That cut the last tie between me and Mrs. Lyn, and I ran away.'

'A-ahem!' Tom had intended to say something; but he could not,—he had grown quite white,—so he cleared his throat again, and said, with an evident effort—

'And how are things now?'

'Just as they were, lieutenant,' said Euphie, suppressing a sigh,—'just as they were. Nor will they ever be altered for me. He went away thinking me hard and untrue, thinking I had been playing with his feelings all the time. He wrote and told me he would never see a face like mine without thinking there was a false heart behind it.'

'Confound his impudence!' blurted Tom.

'Hush, lieutenant! You would have done the same had you been treated as he had been by Nannie Lyn. And, to cap the climax, his mother before her death wrote and told him that I had robbed and attempted to murder Bob Syme!'

Euphie turned to the lieutenant with a rueful smile; but he had leant his elbow on the table, and his face was hidden by his hand, all but his beard.

'Is it not pitiful?' she continued. 'He at the one end of the earth, and I at the other—two people loving each other sincerely, and yet with all this ocean of miserable misunderstanding between us!'

'I suppose, if he sent for you, you would go yet?' he said lightly, as he straightened himself up. 'You ladies are queer mortals.'

'Yes, lieutenant. If Andrew Craig wanted me, I would go to him—to the uttermost parts of the earth—now.'

Tom uttered a short laugh, and started to his feet.

'I must be going,' he said, looking at his watch.

'Must you go so soon?' said Euphie, with real regret. 'I'm afraid I have bored and tired you with my old-fashioned personal affairs?'

'Not at all, not at all,' protested Tom, with a great semblance of gaiety and good spirits. 'But the old lady at Inweerie will think I have bolted again. Good-bye—Euphie!'

He stood on the threshold of the door holding her hand as though he could not let go, gazing into her eyes with the look of a wounded deer in his own. Suddenly he raised her hand to his lips, and turned away with a husky—

'God bless you!'

In a few more minutes he was out of the town, and was striding blindly on towards Inweerie,—blindly, as by instinct, for the light had faded from the day and the sunshine from the land for aught he saw. The hope he had been cherishing more than he knew—the sweet intoxication of human love in which he had been revelling so joyously of late, under the influence of which heart and soul and mind had been expanding, the first love he had ever felt for woman—had been suddenly and ruthlessly crushed. From the Paradise he had been dreaming of he had been suddenly brought back to the stern and stale and commonplace facts of life, and the experience was bitter—bitter.

'I'll have to be off to-night, mother,' he said

next morning, as he pushed aside his breakfast without tasting it.

'What! awa' a'ready, Tam? I thocht ye was to get a twel'month. Hae ye got your mairchin' orders?'

'Yes, mother. I've got my marching orders in double-quick style,' said Tom grimly.

'Aweel, laddie,' sighed Mrs. Gowans, with forced resignation, 'I fancy what maun be, maun be. I ocht to be thankfu' to God that let ye come back weel an' in honour to me. But ye'll aye write hame to your auld faither an' mither, Tam; for mony a sair greet I've grittin aboot ye, laddie, an' mony a time an' sair I rued being sae sharp wi' ye when ye was a bairn. An', Tam, when ye get a wife, my man, ye'll no' forget me a'thegither, will ye, my laddie?'

Tam threw his arms about her neck and kissed the cheek that was weather-beaten and wrinkled, and wet with tears of love and regret.

'Mother,' he said, looking into the old eyes that seemed to devour him with hungering love, 'I'll never marry any woman as long as you and my father live. I'll write and send plenty to keep you comfortable all your days; so don't bother about me. There, kiss me, mother.'

He kissed her again and again, and she was comforted, for did ever mother have such a loving son! How was she to know that the pain at her son's heart was more keen, more bitter, more unappeasable than her own—the pain of a love that could know no fruition. Alas! the mother-love, grateful and pleasant though it was, could in nowise make up for the lack of that other.

CHAPTER XXI.

FROM THE ANTIPODES.

NO woman of average intelligence could possibly misinterpret the look in Tom Gowans' eyes as he bade good-bye to Euphie that day. It flashed upon her the truth he had so successfully hidden hitherto, and with her nerves thrilling with the sudden realisation of it, with a vain and pitiful regret that it should be so, she came in and sat down to think.

Euphie was not the kind of woman to find a cruel pleasure in seeing a man suffer because she had unhappily become too dear to him. What she felt now was only pain and regret, and a dangerously tender pity for the man whose love she could not return. She was also dismayed and perplexed about their future relations. He had been so good to her—championing and defending her good name; he was so unaffectedly affable and kind; they had begun to be such confidential friends. Alas! what was she to do, if he were to keep coming and looking at her like that? She felt she could not bear it; for, in spite of all his manly loveworthiness, he was not Andrew Craig. And deep in her heart there was ever the latent hope that somewhere,

some day, sooner or later, they would meet again, and then— Not once during all the wanderings of the past eventful years had she ceased to regret him. It seemed, indeed, as if in these early days the thought of him, and the love of him, had been a part of her being.

Meantime, when Tom came back next week, how was she to hide from him the consciousness that she knew him not only for a friend, but for a lover? The thought worried and tormented her for days; but next week Tom did not come. Instead, there came a letter with the London post-mark on the outside, and on the inside these brief sentences:—

'DEAR FRIEND,—As you see by this, I am off. I left the night after I saw you, so could not go along to Leven. This is just to say good-bye, and God for ever bless you.—Always and ever your friend, T. GOWANS,

'Lieut. H.M.S. *Bellerophon.*'

Perhaps it was womanly weakness, perhaps regret for the loss of a friend when friends were so few, perhaps some touch of self-pity for her own lone situation—hard to tell what it was touched her so; but Euphie went out from her class and took a lonely cry to herself over this note.

And it must be confessed that for a considerable time after this the days seemed long, intolerably long, and she would very gladly have seen Tom, with his winsome, debonair manner, once more coming up the street. It was August now, and the corn was ripening to the harvest,

and she reflected how the herring drave would soon be in full swing in old Inweerie, with the boats coming in deep sunk to the gunwales with their silvery freight in the grey dawn of the autumn morning. She smiled ruefully as she remembered with what girlish energy of hope and joy and inspiration of love she had gone to work for the herring-curers that year, thinking to earn something of her own wherewith to go housekeeping with Andrew at the end of the drave. And now—ah me! ah me! And yet, in a way, it might be for the best; for her mind had been developed, her education by travel and otherwise had fitted her to enjoy the highest and best of life, and, for aught she knew, it might be the same with Andrew Craig. Certainly, with a wider experience, such an earnest mind as his must have expanded, and of necessity taken broader views of life. She had grown lenient to Nannie Lyn, recognising in her acts the workings of a small and narrow mind seeking to gratify its own petty ambitions, heedless of a species of suffering she could not imagine. What, after all, had Nannie done more than is being done every day among people holding their heads much higher in society—everywhere, indeed, where principle is lost in the love of money? As the winter wore on, she often found herself wondering where the hard-visaged, black-browed woman could have hid herself in that distant North country—wondering why she had left Inweerie at all.

Such thoughts would flit across Euphie's mind, like cloud shadows over the hills, as she sat alone after her class had gone home for the day; and

meanwhile spring wore on, with gusts of wind, and warm rains, and joyous bursts of sunshine; and ere long, summer, with music of birds, was in the land,—Nature working everywhere her miracles of loveliest colour, until the very ditches bloomed into beauty and fragrance.

But with the passing seasons Euphie's health began to droop; not even the visits to old Inweerie could keep up her spirits for long at a time. For, with all her financial comfort, she felt the lack of kith and kin of her own, and she could not but see that the presents for the children which she invariably brought had not a little to do with the welcome she got from Mary Scott.

She was glad when the end of June came, so that she could pack up and go away somewhere—to the North country, perhaps, to hunt up Nannie Lyn, and bring her home to live with her.

Her spirits rose somewhat with the excitement of packing; the little servant girl whom she kept had been let off for a holiday to attend a picnic, and toward the end of the afternoon she had finished all she had to do, and was ready to start in the morning.

She sat down by the window to rest a while, feeling desperately weary of life, and desperately ill-pleased with herself for being so weary. For had she not been wonderfully provided for, everything considered? What an ungrateful, discontented wretch she was, to be sure! How many nice, agreeable friends she had made through the medium of her little school here! How happy and grateful she ought to be! But

she wasn't—very far from it, indeed. Surely she had been born to dissatisfaction with life!

Her gloomy thoughts were interrupted by a rap of the knocker, and she listlessly went to the door. It was a one-armed man, in a white hat.

'Does Miss Hertzman live here? You are Miss Hertzman?'

'I am.' And then the man and the woman stood staring at each other across the vanished years. She, seeing a grave, handsome man, comely of countenance, heavily bearded, in light tweeds, with a Panama hat that shaded his eyes, and, alas! one arm gone from below the elbow; he, looking at a pale, sweet, worn face, still framed in the abundant flaxen hair, much thinner and older and more refined than he remembered her, but still—Euphie!

Recognition dawned in her eyes; she grew pale as death, and swayed as if about to fall. She did not faint, however; it was only a passing touch of vertigo, and presently she stood up straight and looked at him again.

'Is it really you, Andrew?' she breathed, with her hand extended. 'I would never have known you.'

'No?' he said cheerily. 'I knew you at once.'

She shut the door, and led the way into the parlour, and they both sat down.

The silence that followed was becoming embarrassing; each felt, somehow, a stranger to the other—felt the change time had wrought on each. For this quiet-mannered, refined woman was not the bright, lively, happy Euphie Lyn

Andrew had loved over seven years ago; nor could Euphie see in this grave and thoughtful man, with the great beard and shortened arm, the ruddy, clean-shaven boy whose image she had cherished all these years. The sense of strangeness was strong upon both, but there was no chill of disappointment in it; it was improvement, not deterioration.

'Did you come from Inweerie to-day?' asked Euphie, trying to speak unconcernedly.

'No; I came straight from London to Edinburgh, and on to Leven here,' he replied.

'Oh! Then you must want some tea. Just excuse me a moment.'

She glided swiftly out of the room, and ran into the kitchen to stir the fire and lift on the kettle, and then she was fain to sit down into a chair, her limbs were trembling so.

Ah! He had come—at last—and looking so grave and handsome! Was that really her old boy lover, Andrew Craig? Far more dangerous to her peace of mind, far more a man after her own heart now, than even in these bygone years. Here, she felt, was a man of quick intelligence, and with a mind of his own. She had noted that, as soon as he had doffed his Panama hat. He had also come to her first. Oh, *what* had he come for? But the question suddenly struck her:—how had he known to come here? And she under a different name, too? He said he had not been to Inweerie—where, then, *had* he been to get information about her? *Who* could have told him? It puzzled her as she bustled about and spread a tray with such good things as she had in the house; however, it didn't matter,

he was here again. He had lost an arm, poor fellow—but how?

She was primed full of interrogations as she entered the room again with the tea. Andrew was standing at the window, looking out over the Forth, when she opened the door, and he turned to her with a smile.

'It does me good to see them shooting their lines over yonder again,' he said; and Euphie recognised the old mellow tone of his voice.

'Yes; I never feel far from home when I can see a brown lug-sail on the water,' she responded. 'Now, come and have some tea.'

'This looks as if I were welcome,' he said, looking at her.

'Welcome! You must surely know that any one from Inweerie is welcome here.'

The smile left his eyes, but he murmured, 'I suppose so.'

She filled a cup of tea and passed it to him, and also helped him to bread and butter, noting with a pang of pity that he had but his right hand to use. Andrew kept stirring his tea, but tasting nothing.

'You have come home to stay, have you?'

'I don't know yet; it depends.'

'Well, you couldn't have chosen a better time,' she said. 'It is so much more pleasant now than if you had come in winter.'

'Oh, the season of the year would have made no difference. I came away whenever you sent for me.'

Euphie laid down the cup which she had raised to her lips, and stared at him.

'As soon as I was told you wanted me, I came,' he added.

He kept stirring his tea gravely as he spoke, not once looking at her; but Euphie had risen and was confronting him with flashing eyes. Evidently she was controlling herself with an effort.

'You will excuse me, Mr. Craig, if I tell you you are mistaken. You have made a terrible mistake if you think I sent for you.'

Andrew pushed back his cup and rose too, pale as death.

'A mistake! Did you not send a message that you wished to see me?' he demanded, with sudden sternness.

'I! You must be mad! Oh, oh!' she cried; and, unable longer to control her overstrained feelings, she covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

When she again looked up, Andrew Craig, with his back to the opposite wall, was regarding her in stern wonder and doubt.

'I beg your pardon, Mr. Craig; I have not been so strong recently, and it has been such a surprise your coming—and you thinking I could possibly so far forget myself as to say I wanted you.'

'Then you really don't want me?'

'I sent no message, I assure you. Whoever wrote you such an absurd statement?'

'No one wrote to me. Tom Gowans, an old schoolfellow of ours—of mine, I mean—came to the warehouse where I was book-keeper, and told me that you wanted me.'

'Tom Gowans?' gasped Euphie.

'Tom Gowans—and I was fool enough to believe him.'

Euphie was thunderstruck; but the shock brought her to herself, and to her mindfulness of her duty as a hostess.

'Sit down,' she said, resuming her own chair; but Andrew bowed stiffly, and, thanking her, said he would stand the few minutes he had now to stay.

So Tom Gowans had shipped himself off to Melbourne to bring back to her the man she had confessed she still loved? How like Tom it was!—especially in the way of accomplishing his end—on the principle that the end justified the means.

'I am very, very sorry,' said Euphie sincerely. 'Lieutenant Gowans knowing that—that—well, you know, things are long remembered here, and he had taken it into his head'—

'He told me that *you* told him, and you must have said something to him. How otherwise could he have known that my letter was opened and kept back from you by Nannie Lyn?'

'Well,' said Euphie faintly, 'of course I did tell him about that, but to say that I—that I'—

'That you wanted me was a lie—eh? Well, then, Euphie, I am sorry to have intruded where I was not wanted. You need not tell any of the Inweerie folks that you have seen me. Do me that favour, at least. I shall go back with the ship I came on.'

His words were clear and incisive, and cut her sharply, as he slipped his one hand into his vest and pulled out his watch.

He took up his hat and prepared to go; but

she rose up from her chair and motioned him back.

'No, no, not yet. You must take something back before you go,' she said desperately, and, opening an escritoire which stood in a corner, she, with shaking hands, pulled out some letters from a private drawer. As she did so, something fell to the floor.

'Allow me,' he said, and, stooping, picked up the old book-mark.

'Oh, it is not that—not that—it is *this*.' And she picked out the letter he had written in his rage and sent to her. He looked at it, and a red flush rose to his face as she watched him.

'I must ask you to forgive this,' he said. 'I was furiously angry and insulted by that horrible valentine you sent me, and'—

'I send you a valentine! Now, pray, what next?'

'Euphie,' he exclaimed, as if a light had suddenly dawned on him, 'we are no longer rash youngsters, as in those dear old days. But that there has been some devilry at work here is as clear as daylight. I got an abominable low caricature in answer to the note I sent with the book-mark, and in my anger over it I wrote that back to you.' Euphie clasped her hands together tightly.

'God forgive you, Nannie Lyn, wherever you are,' she murmured. 'But how could *you* believe that I could do that—when'—

'Well, I shall not go back to Australia without making you understand one thing, Euphie. I have loved you all along, in spite of everything —in spite of myself, indeed. I shall love no

other woman while I live. There, it can't be helped, I suppose.'

He tore up the odious letter into fragments, and crushed them in his hand.

'This'— he resumed, holding up the book-mark; but here he suddenly stopped and laid it down before her.

Her face flushed crimson. She took it up, and after a moment's hesitation, held it out to him again, with appealing eyes.

When the little girl came home from the picnic, she came slipping noiselessly along the carpeted hall to the parlour to tell her mistress she had got home. But when she got to the door and was about to knock, she found it open, and profound silence within. The mistress, surely, was out, or up-stairs. She stepped inside, but darted back like a guilty thing. For there was the mistress standing over near the window, with a gentleman's arm about her waist and her arms about his neck, holding each other fast—as though they could never let go again—and all the time saying never a word!

CHAPTER XXII.

ANOTHER VISITOR FROM THE ANTIPODES.

'THAT'S all very well, my dear, but I couldn't afford to lose my self-respect by sponging upon my wife, no matter if she was twice as well off,' said Andrew Craig to Euphie, about a week after their quiet marriage. 'I have letters of recommendation here from the firm which employed me in Melbourne, and if you wouldn't mind going to Edinburgh to live, I think I can get a book-keeper's position there. I have a letter to my employer's brother, and another to his cousin. You know, my wife, though I am a poor man, I feel like retaining my independence. And then I should rust doing nothing. It is impossible, so don't speak of such a thing; I *must* work.'

He was arguing against Euphie's proposition that they should go into the country and together live quietly on her money; for Andrew had come home almost as poor as when he had gone away, though through no fault of his.

He had gone straight to the diggings when he first went out, and had met with more than usual success. The 'luck' seemed to be with him, much to the envy of some less fortunate and less

scrupulous diggers, whose cupidity was aroused by Andrew's good fortune. They were a motley crowd at the diggings; of all kindreds and tongues, and Andrew began to see that if he was to save his gold he must get off to Melbourne with it as soon as possible. He had already hidden it in an improvised leather belt, which he wore about his body while he slept. All his plans were laid; he was to leave on the morrow for Melbourne, glad to get away from the living hell which the place had become to him. For hours he lay awake, kept from sleep by some subtle presentiment of coming evil. A hushed movement in the tent made him start up; he felt the belt at his waist grappled, and being cut by a sharp knife.

He tried to cry out, but powerful hands held him down and gagged him. None the less, he fought hard for his gold. He struck out wildly, but his left arm was seized as in a vice, wrenched and twisted till he fainted with the pain. When he came to, his gold was gone; nor, though he made an alarm, could any trace of the robbers be found. The bone of his arm was crushed so badly that he had to be carried into Melbourne to the infirmary, where it was amputated at the elbow.

The loss of it well-nigh broke Andrew's heart; he was young, and with a strong love of comeliness, and the idea of going through life maimed in this fashion was intolerable. But after a little he got over it somewhat, and then the question presented itself, How was he to earn his living now? Hard work was impossible; he must get something which could be done with one hand only. The doctor, who had heard his story, asked him if he knew anything

of book-keeping. Andrew shook his head and answered 'No.' But after he had left the hospital the idea took root in his mind.

He had always been the head boy in the school at arithmetic, he wrote a fair round hand, why could he not *learn* book-keeping?

Fortunately, he still possessed a small nugget of gold, which he had left out, wrapped in a piece of paper, and carried in his coat pocket. This the robbers at the diggings had not cared to search, and besides, some more humane and sympathetic companions, pitying his misfortune, had insisted on his acceptance of a few morsels of their own pile, which he could dispose of when he got to Melbourne.

With this he had sufficient to keep him for a year or so, and, as he said, setting 'a stout heart to a stey brae,' he entered as a pupil in a small business college in a quiet part of the town, and there learnt how to begin life over again.

The fees were high, *very* high, but then everything else was at an extravagant rate in these days of digging for gold.

So quickly did Andrew learn, so thoroughly did he master the art of book-keeping, and such a talent for arithmetic did he show, that in six months he was asked to become the teacher's assistant, at a fair salary. He taught for a year, but at the end of it accepted a situation as book-keeper in a large warehouse, which had been offered him through the influence of some friends. Here he continued, until one day the arrival of Lieutenant Gowans broke in upon the even tenor of his life, when he threw up the situation, found a substitute, and came over to Euphie

Lyn, whom Tom Gowans, with the most noble and self-effacing intentions, had represented as requiring his presence in Leven as soon as a keel could carry him thither.

Euphie found it easy to forgive Tom the grim humour of the trick he had played on Andrew. It was his way of doing things; and when she considered the personal secret he had unconsciously betrayed when last she saw him, she began to understand the nobility underlying it all, and felt very tender toward him.

Andrew listened with great surprise when his wife explained to him that she had enough to keep both in comfort. Tom had certainly told him how Euphie had been left a little, and was turning her knowledge of the languages she had learned into account by keeping a 'sort of school,' as he called it, but he seemed astounded when he learned the whole amount that had been willed to her.

To reconcile himself to the idea of living without work, however, was a simple impossibility to Andrew Craig, and, finding him not to be moved from his resolution, Euphie consented to go to Edinburgh.

'But first we must go to Inweerie,' she said; and one fine day the rumour went eddying through the town that Andrew Craig was back, minus an arm, but with a wife—and who but Euphie Lyn! As they passed down the familiar street, nodding and saluting all whom they met, the women came to the doors and looked after them, with arms akimbo, and faces full of kindly interest.

'Me! I thocht Tam Gowans was coortin' her? They say she has bawbees.'

'Aweel, they're a wise-like couple; but I wonder hoo he lost his airm? The folk are awfu' rough in thae ootlandish places like Austreelyie.'

And so on went the comments; for the wives of Inweerie did not sneak in behind lace curtains to peep at strangers passing, but honestly came out to make a personal inspection in the open air, commenting audibly thereon in the hearing of all whom it might concern.

After a day and a night spent in the dear old place, renewing old friendships, and hearing of all that had transpired in his absence, Andrew left his wife with Mary Scott, while he proceeded to attend to his own personal business in Edinburgh.

'Me, Euphie, ye could hae knockit me doon wi' a feather when I saw you an' Andrae come in,' said Mary, as they sat talking, when the children had all gone to sleep. 'I canna mind wha it was said it, I'm sure, but it was aboot twa year syne, somebody frae Anst'er had gotten a letter, and spoke aboot Andrae Craig bein' marrit.'

Euphie laughed musically.

'He's married now, at all events, hard and fast,' she said, with a happy smile; for a great deal of the buoyant joyousness of her nature had returned to her with her new-found happiness.

Mary laughed too at the idea of such a thing.

'I declare, Euphie, ye're no' safe to turn ower a word ye hear. Look what they said aboot you an' Bob Syme; an' then they tuk it i' their heads that Tam Gowans was after ye, an' you keepin' up the correspondence wi' Andrae a' the time!'

Euphie merely smiled again. She did not enlighten Mary as to the cause of Andrew's sudden reappearance on the scene; there was no necessity for it.

'Bless my heart, lassie! is this you? An' ye're Mrs. Craig now—eh?' said Thomas Mathers, stepping in. 'See how broken ships can come to land! I'm just new in frae the sea, an' couldna tak' aff my sea-boots till I cam' to see ye. An' hoo's Andrae?'

'Oh, splendid. He's off to Edinburgh. We are going to live there, you see. He was up at the house, but you weren't in, of course.'

'Eh, lassie, hoo things come aboot! An' did ye ever find oot Nannie Lyn?'

'No—I wish I could.'

Suddenly Thomas broke into a short laugh.

'I mind aboot twa year syne there was a rumour got up that Andrew was marrit, but I just lauched at it. I kent better than that—eh, Euphie, my lass?'

As he said this he gave her a fatherly pat on the shoulder with his red, weather-beaten hand, and smiled into her face significantly.

Euphie returned his smile, and responded—

'Yes, Thomas; you were about the only one who did know everything. You have got your poems published, I hear.'

'Ay, my lass,' said Thomas, thrusting his hand inside his vest and drawing out a modest volume in paper cover; 'an' here's a copy for yersel' to keep for the sake o' auld Inweerie.'

'No, but for the sake of yourself, Thomas. And you'll come to Edinburgh and stay a few days with us when the boats are laid up?'

'I will that. I enjoy a day in Auld Reekie mair than onything. Woman, when I get up on yon muckle Castle rock an' look doon, it's no' your Edinburgh I see, but a great crood o' folk rinnin' hurry-scurry, breathless an' pechin', after that stoury, forfouchten chiel' comin' gallopin' up the street wi' news frae Flodden field. Or I see the Covenanters wi' firm stap an' set faces marchin' up the High Street to sign the solemn League an' Covenant, throwin' up a solid sea-dyke again' the high tide o' Romish slavery an' priestcraft settin' in. Ah, lassie, there was a strong backbane in auld Scotland in thae days, an' it's braw an' easy for us at this distance, livin' in the peace an' freedom thae siccar auld billies coft for us, to turn roond an' ca' them narrow-minded bigots. Let me tell ye, it's been a very gude thing for us that they *were* just sic narrow-minded bigots—men that saw naething afore them but their duty, and did it. A silver-mounted cane winna pry open an airn door, it needs a narrow-minded, onbendable crawbar for that; an gude be thankit, they pried open a door o' freedom for us that'll never be steekit in this world again. But I maun awa' hame to my tea. I left Peggie roastin' a buffed herrin' when I cam' oot. There's naething I like better for a bit relish than a gude buffed herrin'.'

Thomas departed; and in a couple of days Andrew returned, and they went back to Leven to pack up. He had been successful in securing a situation; his letter of introduction had been of much service to him, and his countenance had done the rest.

They found a pretty little cottage out at Morn-

ingside, and there Andrew and Euphie at last fairly began life together.

To each it seemed too great happiness to last, for each found in the other that sympathy and friendship which is the true bond of marriage; and after all the misunderstanding of the past, it was so delicious to be able to love without a shadow between them.

Every morning at eight Andrew left the house, and every afternoon about half-past five he returned to the rest of his home and to Euphie, who invariably came down a little way to meet him.

It was a sunny morning in April, and Euphie was busy about the house singing an old ballad, as she moved about dusting and arranging the pretty little knick-knacks in the fairy drawing-room, which she had furnished with exquisite taste.

A ring at the bell caused her to doff her dusting-cap, and she put off her apron and went to the door.

A sharp-nosed, bright-eyed little woman, with a little boy at her feet and a baby girl in her arms, stood staring at her keenly.

'Is this where Andrew Craig lives?'

'Yes, Mr. Craig lives here,' replied Euphie, with some dignity.

'I mean Andrew Craig from Melbourne, in Australia. I want no mistake about it,' said the woman, with resentful dilation of her thin nostrils.

'Yes, it is the same Mr. Craig from Melbourne.'

'Then I must see him at once. I am his wife.'

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CHAPTER XXIII.

TO THE NORTH COUNTRY.

'HIS wife!' exclaimed Euphie, with an abrupt laugh. 'His wife! Woman, you must be mad!'

'Am I?' snapped the woman, her eyes sparkling with anger. 'I'll very soon show you whether I am mad or not;' and she, unbidden, walked inside, leading her little boy by the hand, while Euphie, half stupefied, followed her in.

'He seems to have done pretty well at the diggings to be able to set up like this,' said the woman, sitting down on a parlour chair, and lowering her baby down upon her knee.

The mention of the diggings sent a cold chill through Euphie, and simultaneously there flashed on her the report that Mary Scott and Thomas Mathers had heard of Andrew being married in Australia. But—go away! the idea of such a thing!

She looked at the woman with growing annoyance, and, unable to bear her assumption of proprietorship, said sharply—

'Are you aware that you are talking to Mrs. Craig—Andrew Craig's wife?'

'No, ma'am; it's Mrs. Craig that's talking to you. I'm his lawful married wife, married in Melbourne four years ago. He left me and went to the diggings, and never sent me a scrape of a pen to say whether he was dead or alive from that day to this. I heard that he had got robbed of the gold he got, and had his arm broken into the bargain'—

'Stop!' cried Euphie in an awful voice, as she held up her hand. 'Where is your proof of any such marriage?'

'Proof? Oh, I have proof enough. I wasn't such a greenhorn as to come all this way after a runaway husband without my marriage certificate to prove the truth of what I say. The man who could run away and desert his lawful wife and children is just the man to deny them if he dare. Let him deny *that*, if he can.'

The woman as she spoke rummaged in the bosom of her dress, and drew forth a paper from the inner folds of a pocket-book; Euphie, still as a statue, looking stonily on.

'Do you think he will dare to deny that, or the registration signed by his own hand of this boy's birth in the registry over there? Read that.'

Euphie did not touch the paper the woman spread out and held up to her, but her eyes eagerly scanned the words which seemed to wither and dry up her soul within her. There was the damning proof, in a fair round hand on an official form, certifying that Andrew Craig, bachelor, and Anne Matthews, spinster, were this day married by the Rev. Mr. Frazer, of the Presbyterian Church, etc., all of which was

duly signed by witnesses, whose names Euphie did not care to look at. She had seen enough. The expression in Euphie's face seemed to touch the woman, it was so still and cold. Dark rings had gathered about her eyes, her lips tightened and drew back at the corners, her eyes grew dull and staring; she herself felt as if something had suddenly died within her.

'I'm very sorry for you if he's deceived you, and led you to think he was a single man, but —there are his children.'

Euphie again put up her hand.

'Let me think—excuse me—you are quite right—I thank you—but I want time to think.'

She pressed both hands to her temples and stared hard at the carpet, as if to draw some meaning of all this from it, when the woman rose and lifted the baby into her arms.

'I'm very sorry for you, ma'am; but, you see, he's my lawful husband, and he's got to acknowledge these children. I'll go away just now, and come back when he's in.'

The movement and the words brought Euphie back to her senses again. She grasped the woman firmly and pushed her down upon the chair she had risen from.

'No, it is I who must go. You stay here—your place is here, in his house; you must be here when he comes home this afternoon.'

She spoke in a cool, incisive voice, devoid of feeling of any kind, only conscious of a clear, decisive sense of what she had to do.

'Come in here to the bedroom and take off your things,' she said, leading the way into the pretty little bedroom she had taken such wifely

pride in. 'Here is the wardrobe. I will empty it immediately.'

With rapid movements she took her dresses one by one off the hooks and laid them upon a chair, and then she mutely emptied the drawers, and finally handed the woman the key.

'But, dear bless me!' protested the deserted wife, 'there's no hurry. I really feel it must be hard on you—and'— Here the sharp little woman laid her baby upon the bed and burst out crying and sobbing.

A sense of what this other woman was suffering struck her keenly—it seemed so hard that she should be the cause of it; but what could she do?

'Andrew Craig is a bad, wicked man to come and deceive a woman like you,' she began; but Euphie silently threw her dresses over her arm, and, taking her wedding bonnet and some knick-knacks in her hands, prepared to leave the room.

'Whenever you are ready, I shall show you where everything is,' she said in a still voice, and went into the kitchen.

The large travelling-trunk which Madame Hertzman had bought for her, and which had gone with her everywhere, stood in a lumber-room off the kitchen, and she drew it out and threw open the lid. As she looked into it she seemed to forget what she had brought it out for, and again she held her temples hard with both hands.

Ah yes, she remembered now! She was going away for ever—for ever—for ever!

The kitchen table was standing in its place

white and spotless, and Euphie spread the dresses out upon it, and folded them with precise neatness, and laid them into the trunk. Once or twice Andrew Craig's face, grave and gentle, looking love into hers, rose up before her imagination, but she put it resolutely behind her, and went on grimly with her packing. Every vestige of her personal belongings—her work-basket, with its thimble and scissors, and the half-finished smoking-cap she had been making for him—everything that could remind him closely of her she took away. All else—the complete furnishing of the house, furnished with her own money—she left behind; and when she had filled the trunk and a valise to overflowing, she went into the bedroom again. The woman was sobbing softly, having taken the boy up in her lap; the baby had gone to sleep in the bed.

'Better come and have some tea,' said Euphie quietly.

'I thank you; I couldn't eat or drink. What's the use of my coming, after all? If he had cared for me he would never have left me, and what's the use of a man if he doesn't care for you? I wish I had stayed, and never come after him.'

'But I am glad you did. It would have been a terrible thing if you hadn't,' said Euphie, with chill politeness. 'Come into the kitchen, and I will show you where you can get everything. Your husband will be home at half-past five; he likes his dinner then.'

There was some suppressed, compelling force in Euphie's speech which made the woman get up and follow her. She had expected a fearful scene when she came to claim her husband, and

had braced herself up for it, but this passive acquiescence in the situation baffled her. At the first look she had been angrily jealous of Euphie's blithe beauty; the dark eyes and rare flaxen hair and pleasant countenance made her heart sink within her. She felt that her husband would never look at her after marrying such a woman. But Euphie's silent suffering, the mute agony, the immediate renunciation of what she had considered her rights, completely disarmed the angry woman; it was all so different from what she had anticipated, she felt ashamed of having, without merciful forewarning, sprung such a mine under her feet.

'You will find everything in fair order,' said Euphie. 'Ah, here is the butcher's boy for the order. What would you like to order for dinner?'

'Dinner! Is it dinner you think of at a time like this?'

Euphie stepped outside.

'Send up two pounds of steak,' she said to the boy, who stood in the open doorway; 'and when you go past the livery stable, will you please tell them to send up a hack in about half an hour or so?'

'The boy will bring the meat as usual,' she announced, re-entering the kitchen. 'And now I will leave you here to make yourself acquainted with the house, while I go and write a letter.'

The woman began to look scared; this still, business-like way of taking such a serious, emotional matter frightened her, sharp and snappy though she was.

'You'll surely not go away and leave me in

a strange house until he comes?' she said, with new timidity.

'It is your own house—your husband's house; your place is here. There should be no third party to your meeting.'

'He'll kill me!' exclaimed the woman, with a gesture of despair.

Euphie started, spurred to some show of feeling by the woman's utter dejection.

'Kill you! Who will kill you?'

'Craig—Andrew Craig. Oh, he has a dreadful temper when he's roused.'

Once more the vision of Andrew, with his grave, kindly eyes and thoughtful smile, rose up before Euphie, and once more she put it behind her. This woman was sharp-tongued and provoking—perhaps she had provoked him to anger, and he had enough manly fire in him to resist womanish nagging.

'Don't say anything to anger him, be as forbearing as you can,' she said, and left the woman to her own thoughts. She had not once looked at the little boy. She would not allow her eyes to fall upon this woman's son who called Andrew Craig father, and it grated on her ear to hear his childish voice in the house.

Euphie had bought Andrew, among other things, a handsome writing-desk as a special marriage present, and now she sat down to indite a last note to him. With the act of communicating with him, a wild, irresistible wave of tenderness and regret swamped her resolution for a moment or two; but she struggled against it and overcame it, and steeled her heart against him. She would not allow herself to think of

him in connection with her at all; she tried to laugh at the completeness of her disillusion, and she took a sort of grim, puritanic pleasure in showing how liberally she could heap coals of fire upon his head.

First, she stated the fact of his wife's arrival. Second, as in duty bound, she now abdicated in favour of his wife, the writer being no wife at all. Third, she left everything within the house to him, his wife, and children, taking with her only her personal wardrobe and sundry souvenirs of Madame Hertzman. Fourth, there was also a sum of money in the secret drawer of this desk, which she left as a present to the children. Fifth, he was earnestly implored to do his duty as a man to those who were legally as well as naturally his own, and to rest assured that their lives would never be disturbed by the presence of—Euphie Lyn Hertzman.

This precise document she enclosed in an envelope, but did not seal it.

'Will you please give this to your husband when he comes home?' she said, entering the kitchen fully attired for travelling.

'Oh, for God's sake, don't go till he comes home! He'll be so mad to think I've traced him all the way here,' pleaded the woman; but Euphie quietly pointed to a hack turning the corner of the street.

'Good-bye. There is the cab.'

The bell rang furiously, and Euphie opened the door, and pointed to her travelling-trunk and valise.

'There's no address on 'em,' observed the smart cabby.

'Oh, I forgot. Never mind, take them as they are.'

She followed him out, taking the heavy valise in her own hand, in order to shut the door of Andrew Craig's house upon herself the sooner.

'Where to?' asked cabby, gathering up the reins.

Where to?' she echoed, with a vacant stare. 'I don't know.'

'Well, missus,' said cabby patronisingly, 'I can drive you 'most anywhere, but I'm blowed if I can drive you to nowhere.'

'Ah — let me see — to Banff!' exclaimed Euphie, with evident relief.

'But, ma'am, this here's a city cab, and Banff is some couple o' hundred miles north, you see. That's too long a fare for a city hack.'

'I beg your pardon. To the station — the Waverley Station.'

'Here's a rummy go!' muttered cabby, and drove rapidly off.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PEDLAR'S INFORMATION

IT was a 'rummy go' indeed, for it had never once struck Euphie *where* she could go; the one overmastering idea, shutting out all others, was to get away—away from sight and sound of Andrew Craig and his Australian wife. But when compelled to face the question of where, her thoughts instinctively reverted to Nannie Lyn, and Banff was the first name that occurred to her as being in that vague 'North country.'

She went into the booking-office at the Waverley Station and got her trunks labelled with that calm, mechanical method which some natures assume when conscious of a terrible calamity having overtaken them, feeling the necessity of putting it from them for the time being, knowing they dare not think of it if they are to exist. Euphie comprehended it all—the degradation of her position, the desolation of her life, the future; but she must get away now, away to the North country where Nannie Lyn came from; she must preserve her senses till she got there and settled down in some haven of refuge; she might then look her trouble in the face and grapple with it. When by force of will

and determination one resists the physical pain of a sudden blow, setting the teeth hard, and refusing to give way to the sickening thrill of the nerves that calls attention to the wound, it is astonishing how the keen edge of agony can be dulled. Euphie felt this as she was borne along in the train to Banff; she knew the trouble was there, overshadowing and pressing in upon her with cruel force, but she would not give in to it. It must wait; by and by she would lie prostrate under it, she knew that—but not yet—not yet. No one riding in the compartment with her could have guessed that the sweet-voiced, courteous woman, who spoke tenderly to the little fretting babe upon the knee of the woman opposite, was like a wounded animal in search of a seclusion in which to suffer undisturbed.

Not even when she had landed, and had settled herself in a respectable lodging, did she allow herself to think of it. Once or twice it had surged up in spite of her, and it had been more than she could bear and live. It was as if she had tasted with her lips some bitter draught which she must needs drink, and, shrinking, she put the cup away from her.

But when it became necessary to unpack the household gods she had brought away with her, the floodgates of her sorrow burst forth at the sight of them, and at last she had it out. For days she lay in bed unable to eat or drink; but when at length she rose, a faded image of her former self, it was with a new interest in life, and with the consciousness of a new duty awaiting her. She must not grieve for what was past, she must not give way to vain regrets, the

future must now be made as favourable and pleasant as possible; this was now her imperative duty.

In the meantime she would try to find out Nannie Lyn. She had heard Banff mentioned as the vicinity which she had originally come from, and her first road, when she went out, was to the office of the most widely-circulated local paper, offering a few pounds' reward for such information as would lead to the discovery of Mrs. Lyn, whom she described as an elderly woman, tall, dark, and of sallow complexion, with sunken eyes set somewhat close together.

But a month passed without any word of Nannie, and at last Euphie ceased advertising, thinking she must surely not be alive.

She was beginning to feel uncomfortable in her lodgings. The landlady, with insatiable inquisitiveness, had skirmished around the outskirts of civility and good manners, trying to make out what manner of flaxen-haired woman this was who acknowledged to being neither maid, wife, nor widow. At length, noting certain symptoms peculiar to wifehood, she boldly demanded to know who and what Euphie was.

'Do you want more money?' asked Euphie, with calm recognition of the woman's meaning.

'No; it's no' money, it's decency I want. I'm a decent woman mysel', and I keep nane but decent folk aboot me.'

'What makes you think I am not decent?' queried Euphie, a slow flush creeping up her thin cheeks.

'Weel, for ae thing ye've nae man, an' nae veesible means o' livin' that I can see, an' ye

canna but say that things are beginnin' to look serious.'

'Very well; here is your money I owe you, and sufficient to pay for a few days more. I will leave at the end of the week.'

Euphie locked the door on the inside when the landlady departed grumbling about 'strange folk,' and, unable to repress a low moan, she threw herself upon the bed. It was the first imputation of shame she had ever known in all her life, and the cruelty and injustice of human prejudice and human laws, which attach hazy stigmas to the innocent, struck her keenly. For the first time she realised what it was to be a woman alone in the world—a woman desiring to keep her own counsel and her own private affairs to herself. It had not before occurred to her that she was now liable to be the butt of the veriest wretch who could show a marriage certificate. She had one too, but it was a lie—had always been a lie, and she would not use it now, not even in her own defence. She began to dread the thought of meeting even Nannie Lyn, should she ever turn up; for how could she explain to her? Would she not say, 'As she had made her bed, so she must lie on it,' and refuse to have anything to do with her?

Perhaps, after all, it was as well Nannie and she should never meet, for a taunt like this she could not bear. In spite of her resolution to do her duty and bear up, she felt miserable and discouraged at the thought of looking about further for lodgings. Landladies, as a rule, were experienced and sharp-eyed, and Euphie unfortunately was good-looking, with a history too

plainly written in her face. She had interviewed three different individuals with 'furnished rooms to let,' and each had inquired if her husband was with her.

'Oh, then you are a widow?'

When Euphie shook her head and again said 'No,' the landlady shut her lips with a virtuous snap, and sniffed sulphur, and said 'she did not care to let her rooms to women.'

She found the agents who rented cottages quite as superlatively prone to think the worst. First they asked her name, and when she hesitated, they became flippant and offensively familiar. Euphie would not say 'Mrs. Craig'—she was too truthful to take a title which she thought she had now no right to; and when she said 'Miss Hertzman,' they looked at her with a tolerant smile, and coughed slightly.

'Of course I shall pay you the rent in advance,' she said desperately.

Of course—of course—they had no doubt, but they would prefer to lease the house to some married couple—who had—ah—sufficient hypothec.

Euphie, with a disagreeable sense of covert insult clinging to her, turned away, wondering to herself what on earth was hypothec.

Fortunately, she found a pedlar waiting for her when she came home with listless step from this last house-hunting expedition. He came to inform her of the whereabouts of Mrs. Lyn, and to claim his reward. He was a man who had hawked his small wares — pins and needles, threads, cheap laces, handkerchiefs, and other saleable etceteras—around the countryside for

years. He knew Mrs. Lyn well—a queer, lonely woman living in a remote hamlet some ten miles north of Banff—a woman who suspected everybody, lived with her door locked, opening it only when any one knocked, and always bewailing her extreme poverty, and the fight she had to live. She lived by knitting stockings.

Something like a thrill of joy shot through Euphie as she listened to the pedlar. Even Nannie Lyn was preferable to the hard and sinister experiences of the past few days; and then what joy to think of rescuing Nannie from poverty, and making her comfortable in her old age! She was only too glad to pay the reward she had offered; and as soon as she had copied in her note-book an accurate description of the place and the location of the house, she feverishly began to pack up and be off.

There was little difficulty in finding the house in that small North-country village. She did not even need to inquire the way to it. The pedlar's description led her straight to the door of a little whitewashed cottage, with a thatched roof and a quaint little attic window set in the centre close to the eaves.

Euphie knocked thrice before any answer came, but she heard movement within, and waited.

'Wha's that chappin'?' called a voice which she instantly recognised as Nannie Lyn's, only harsher and sharper than of yore, and with a new note of querulousness.

'It's Euphie. Open the door, Mrs. Lyn,' said Euphie gently.

A suppressed cry of dismay was the only

answer, and in a little while she knocked again. After an interval she heard a fumbling and drawing of bolts, and then the door opened cautiously, and a thin, emaciated face, sallow and unwashed, with deep-set, unfriendly eyes, scanned her suspiciously.

'What are you afraid of? Why don't you let me in?' said Euphie, inwardly shocked to see the change in the tough, hard-grained woman she had fled from years ago.

'What d'ye want?' queried Mrs. Lyn, opening the door with a shaking hand, grudgingly.

Euphie silently stepped into the house, and Nannie bolted the door and followed her.

'I've nae way for onybody here,' she said. 'I've fecht enough to get my ain bite, far less ony ither body's.'

She uttered these words with a sort of whine which was new to Euphie, and which grated on her as insincere. But the change which had taken place in the woman! She looked a living skeleton, gaunt and wrinkled, her high cheek-bones standing prominently out, wearing the same wincey dress of dark grey with black velvet bands about the skirt that Euphie remembered, but now hanging about her figure limp and loose, and patched everywhere. The old black net cap which covered her grizzled hair was of a nondescript tone, between a brown and a grey, with the wear and dust of years plainly visible upon it. The house was fairly tidy, however, and she herself did not look unclean; nevertheless, there was a sad and visible deterioration. Euphie surveyed her long and pityingly.

'You have surely been ill, have you?' she said, sitting down without being bidden.

'Ay. I'm no' weel ava, an' I've hard wark gettin' a livin'. I've nae way for naebody but mysel'. I've naething but what I mak' wi' a loop o' a stockin'. I've naething—no' a bawbee.'

Again that disagreeable whine disturbed Euphie, but she answered gently—

'Sit down—why do you stand? I haven't come to ask anything from you, Mrs. Lyn. I knew you were ill-off when I came, but I have enough to keep us both comfortable. You needn't knit stockings any more for people. All I want is to live with you and make you comfortable. Here is something to begin with.'

She took out her purse, and taking out a pound-note, she held it out to the hungry-looking woman.

'Eh, but that'll no' gae far to keep twa folk,' she said, taking the note nevertheless; 'an' ye'll no' be carin' to live as I dae. A drap tea an' a bit bannock is a' my debosh, an' ye'll no' care for that?'

'No, Mrs. Lyn. I must have good food, and so must you. You look as if you had been starved to death almost. However, you won't need to want for anything so long as I have it. I have plenty of money.'

'Ye—ye look like a leddy,' said Nannie, surveying her with wonder, 'an' ye speak English. Whaur hae ye been?'

Euphie was quite prepared for interrogations.

'Look here, Mrs. Lyn; you are not my mother, but I am ready to be a good daughter to you, and I will promise to ask no questions.

Let all bygones be bygones. I will make you very comfortable, and pay you well for the use of your room there—all I want from you in return is, to ask no questions on your side. You understand?'

'Yes, mem,' said Nannie, unconsciously answering as to a superior; for Euphie at that moment looked at her with an expression of face, and spoke in a tone of voice, which recalled her mother in London years ago.

'No, don't say that, Mrs. Lyn. The people here can think I am your daughter come home to you.'

'Eh, but they canna do that. I tauld them I was a lane widow woman—an' it was the truth I said.'

'Then I can be a lodger, that'll do. Now, let me see your room, and we'll get settled down. My luggage will be sent up from the station.'

'An' you'll need naething aff me—railly?'

'Nothing—nothing but a kind word, if you have such a thing to spare,' said Euphie, with a kind of grim ruefulness.

The room was well enough furnished for a small house; there was even on the floor the old carpet she remembered in Inweerie, but the place smelt damp and nasty.

'We must get on a big fire here,' said Euphie, sniffing the damp.

'Coals is dear—awfu' dear,' whined Mrs. Lyn.

'I'll buy the coals,' returned Euphie. 'And now, if you'll make a cup of tea while I am away, I'll go to the station and order up my trunks.'

Mrs. Lyn bolted the door securely after

Euphie, but instead of getting on the kettle she began to run back and forth between the two apartments like a thing distracted. At last she took a stout table-knife from a drawer, and going back into the room, she lifted a small map mounted on a roller, which hung suspended upon the wall, evidently to conceal some blemish in the wall. A piece of paper was pasted under it, and this she scraped off, and began to scoop out some loose bits of stone and plaster which it covered. The stones and plaster rattled down upon the floor as she excitedly tore with her fingers and dug with the knife at the aperture she was making; her eyes gleamed, the perspiration stood like beads upon her wrinkled visage, but she never halted until the knife struck hard upon some metallic substance. For a moment she paused to wipe the perspiration from her face, and then with some difficulty she drew forth an old japanned tin box—the same box in which Euphie discovered Andrew Craig's letter that fateful afternoon in old Inweerie.

CHAPTER XXV.

DIED FOR LOVE—OF MONEY.

WHEN Euphie returned from the station, expecting and longing for a cup of refreshing tea after her journey, she was surprised to find Mrs. Lyn panting and exhausted, as if with some extra heavy toil, wet mortar clinging to her hands in spite of the rough wipe they had evidently received. She also noticed on her apron, too, near the hem, two or three spots of mortar, but it only caused a passing sensation of wonder.

The fire had not been touched, nor was the kettle even put on. Euphie sank into a chair with a weary sigh. There was no welcome for her anywhere except in Inweerie, and there she could set foot nevermore. She had been a full half hour and more away, and she did expect that Nannie Lyn, in common civility, would have had a cup of tea ready for her. She did not know, nor could she have dreamed, that Nannie had been out nearly as far as herself in pursuit of mortar from some masons who were building in the rear of the town, and that since her return she had managed, with shaking hands and glittering eyes, to do quite a tidy bit of mason-work.

'Where do you keep the water?' she inquired, quietly taking the kettle in her hand and lifting the lid.

'Oh, I'll get the water,' said Mrs. Lyn, taking the kettle, and again the lime still clinging to the old and skeleton hand made Euphie wonder what she had been doing.

Mrs. Lyn placed the kettle on the fire, muttering something about not expecting her back so soon, and went into a little closet and washed her hands.

'I think I'll lay off my things now, and get a fire lit in that room,' Euphie remarked.

'But there's only that backitfu' o' coals,' protested Nannie, returning to the whine.

'There's a ton of coals coming in an hour or so,' returned Euphie, with some impatience; and, lifting up the 'backit' in her arms, she went into the 'ben-end,' and with some shavings and sticks, which Nannie grudgingly supplied her with, lit the fire, and sat down to watch it burn up.

It was somewhat of a trial to her, this room, furnished to the door with the old familiar chairs and tables, and carpet, and damask table-cover, from Inweerie. A renewed sense of desolation, an intolerable yearning for Andrew Craig,—not that man with the Australian wife, but the ruddy young fisher whom she had always loved, and loved still,—brought tears to her eyes and a growing pain to her heart. Everything in this room reminded her so of these happy old days, and presently her eyes, wandering about, fell upon a spot on the carpet from which white dust and lime had been hastily swept up, leaving a dull mark behind. Upon this dull mark lay one

or two slight drops of wet mortar, and over these Euphie found herself wondering vaguely. What could Mrs. Lyn have been plastering in this room, and while she was away at the station, too? The walls were all whitewashed, there was no sign of recent repairs anywhere, and yet here were these spots of perfectly fresh mortar right below that map of Scotland which used to hang in her room in Inweerie.

The cups and saucers were clinking now in the other room, and she rose to wash her hands before tea. The dear old map! many and many a time she had conned it over, and now she stepped across to look at it. There was the least trace of mortar on the face of it—the mark of a wet finger—still damp. Euphie raised the map and looked behind it, and saw that about a foot square of the wall had been newly plastered up.

'Your tea's ready,' called Nannie.

Euphie dropped the map and went into the kitchen, wondering why Mrs. Lyn should have chosen such a time to repair that hole in the wall.

Nannie's hands were clean enough now, and she had also put on a fresh apron.

It was a poor and scanty meal, the scantiest Euphie had ever tasted; but she said nothing, inwardly resolving to make a decided change here on the morrow.

'Now, you might let me have blankets and sheets, Mrs. Lyn, and I can hang them up to air before my fire—eh?' said Euphie, with an assumed air of cheerfulness; for Nannie Lyn sat opposite her, saying little, and apparently deeply occupied with her own thoughts.

'You see, when I get fairly settled down, I won't give you any trouble for a good while at least. And we ought to live very comfortable here, you and I together. Don't you think so?'

'Oo ay, oo ay,' answered Nannie grudgingly.

'I have the material for a nice dark dress, which I bought for myself, here,' said Euphie. 'I shall make it up for you. You and I can make it up, or shall we get a dressmaker to do it?'

'She would chairge mair than the price o' the claith,' quoth Nannie.

'But I'll pay for it, you know.'

'Aweel,' was the thankless assent.

The coals Euphie had ordered had been driven up to the door, and while Mrs. Lyn showed the man where to drive them around by the back of the house, she took a mute survey of the apartment.

'Might be a worse place,' she commented. 'It is snug and quaint, and, after all, a good open fireplace is not a bad kind of ventilator, if it isn't particularly scientific. Ah, well, it is at least a haven; only Mrs. Lyn has changed so much for the worse. Is it change, or growth of greed, or what is it, I wonder?'

At her elbow was a small red curtain, about eighteen inches deep, gathered at the top in a string, and tacked to the wall close to the jamb of the fireplace.

'What a funny little curtain,' she mused, and, lifting it, behold, it was draped over an old-fashioned bole in the wall. In it were some rags, and a saucer with shoeblacking and a brush. 'Delightfully quaint and handy! What a nice

spot for books, now, for some rural student of an evening.'

She was about to drop the little curtain when her eye caught the point of a sharp little trowel sticking out. She took it up, and saw that the mortar was quite damp around the handle, and, putting it back, she again vaguely wondered why Mrs. Lyn had taken to plastering the holes just then. Perhaps, of course, to make the place tidy. That must be it, to have no ugly holes about, now that she had come to occupy the room. And the poor old body had been hurrying to get the thing done while she was away; nothing more natural, only that wild, suspicious look of hers made everything she did so noticeable.

The room was warm and dry, and the bed-clothes were well aired, but Euphie did not retire early. She knew from past experience that it was of no use going to bed only to toss and tumble, with all the chequered incidents of her recent life passing in vivid array before her. She sat up and read far into the night—long after Nannie Lyn had gone to bed, and when thoroughly tired out she lay down and slept.

It was the greyest of grey dawn when she opened her eyes, awakened by a fitful scraping sound, which she vainly tried to account for.

The noise—if noise it could be called—was faint, but in the perfect stillness she could hear it quite distinctly. She could hear a slow soft scraping, and then an almost inaudible clink, as of sharp substances in contact; and again the brushing, scraping sound continued. Could it be rats? She sprang up in bed at the thought,

for she had an unreasoning horror of the sharp-toothed vermin. The noise stopped a moment; she could detect a low, muffled cough, a faint clink, and then the sandy grating resumed. She could stand the vague fear no longer; whatever it was, 'bird or devil—thing of evil,' she must see its form, and, slipping swiftly out of bed, she thrust a match into the still warm embers of the smouldering coal and lit her candle. All was still in the room; nor sight nor sound of rats was there. Her ear caught the sound of a muffled cough. Good gracious! could it be Nannie Lyn up at this hour—only three o'clock by her watch? Perhaps—could she be ill? The thought sent her hurriedly into the kitchen, the light of her candle nigh extinguished by the draught.

'Are you awake, Mrs. Lyn?' she called, holding the candle high over her head.

There was no answer; but, to her horror, a figure, gaunt and terror-stricken, that of Nannie Lyn, with a trowel in her hand, sprang up from her knees by the cold fireside, her face awful to see. The features, as she looked, grew horribly contorted out of all human shape. The eyes stared at her wildly, and, with a cry of fright, Euphie fled to the door, wrenched back the bolts, and, throwing it wide, ran down the street and wakened the nearest neighbour.

They were quiet labouring people, and in great alarm and anxiety hurried in with Euphie, who had tried to give them a hasty account of what she had seen.

'I feel sure she has gone mad—stark mad,' she said, trembling and shaking in every

limb. 'I knew such a change in her when I came.'

But Mrs. Lyn was not mad,—though, indeed, she had for years back been a hopeless money-maniac,—this was but the snapping of the long tension of money-madness—the end of it all—death!

Death in life, for she lay there an inert thing, a breathing skeleton, stricken down by a fatal paralysis. The distorted features had all but returned to their normal state; the eyes were closed, the trowel lay by her side, and the hole she had so neatly built up was finished and plastered over.

Why on earth had she been doing this in the dim grey hour of the dawning?

Mad—stark mad—surely, for she had just plastered up another hole here in the room that very afternoon.

They lifted her into the bed, and while the man went for a doctor, Euphie took the woman into her room and showed her the new plaster behind the map. She also explained her own presence here, saying that Mrs. [illegible] was her foster-mother, and that she had only that day come to stay with her, and make her comfortable for the rest of her days. Both women came to the conclusion that Mrs. Lyn's mind had been failing, and that she had merely wished to fill up the hole in the early hours of the morning in order not to be seen at it during the day.

'An' maybe to save a mason's wages,' suggested the man, who had returned, saying that the doctor would be down in a few moments.

But when the doctor did come, it was only to

shake his head, and say that death was but a matter of a few days' time. He had seen paralytic strokes like this come on after a long strain, or a sudden shock of some kind, or it might be hereditary. Did they know anything of her people?

'No,' said Euphie, shaking her head sadly.

The doctor looked at her with respectful but inquiring eyes, musing as he looked.

After a few days' painful watching it was all over, and Nannie Lyn, not without some natural tears shed over her coffin, was laid with all the honours of respectability where 'they have no share in all that's done beneath the circuit of the sun.'

'Mrs. Lyn had the house taken for the year, I presume?' said Euphie to the landlord, when he called a few days after the funeral. 'I am her foster-daughter, as perhaps you may have heard, so I shall pay you the rent until Martinmas, and keep the house till then.'

The landlord was only too glad to get his rent so easy; besides, he was a fatherly kind of man, and liked the look of this fair woman, so very different from poor Nannie's dark and forbidding face. The neighbour whom she had roused that night was a gentle, sensible little woman, whom Euphie felt she could made a friend of.

She had a daughter, a nice lively girl of about fifteen, and she confided to Euphie how it would be necessary for her to look for service at the May term, which was almost here now.

'Would you object to her staying with me till Martinmas or so?' inquired Euphie. 'She

is such a bright, intelligent girl, and would be such company for me in the house.'

'I suppose your husband will be coming?' said the woman timidly. Euphie was a good woman, any one could see that, but—her daughter was young and innocent, and—

Euphie could not stand the thought of being lowered in the estimation of these good, worthy people, who had come in and stood by her in all this trial. Had she not honestly married—on her part, at least?

'My husband won't send for me for some months yet; when he does, I will go. Meantime, if you will let Annie come and stay with me, well and good; if not, I must get some one else. Mrs. Craig is my name.'

Annie came to her that night, the decision to let her go being hastened by the very substantial remuneration which Euphie had bestowed on the parents for their neighbourly help.

Euphie made some considerable changes in the interior of the house, and by these also her neighbour profited. The house was too crowded with furniture, and several superfluous things were sent in next door. Then Euphie must have the whole of the walls whitewashed and tinted, and above all, she must have these ugly small stones and lime dug out of that quaint little bole by the fireplace. She should sit there and read of evenings, and there should her books and the daily newspaper be ever at hand.

'Now, Annie, you hold this old basket under while I dig out this stuff. Luckily, the mortar has been sandy and brittle; see, it will come out quite easily.'

Annie held the basket, and Euphie, with hammer and chisel, soon filled it.

'Now, you carry that out, round to the back of the house beyond the garden, and I will loosen the rest while you go.'

Annie went, carrying the little basket between her hands carefully, and Euphie continued the excavation. Suddenly her hammer shot back into a hole, and she drew forward a lot of rubbish, and looked in. The light shone upon the old tin box.

'What on earth!—good gracious!' she exclaimed, and drew forth the familiar and fateful box, and blew the dust off the lid. It was locked, and the key left in it; and Euphie, feeling that here was something which Mrs. Lyn had strongly wished to keep secret, took it into the room and put it into her trunk.

Annie was busy at the bole when she came back.

'I think that would be a fine houdie-hole for onything,' laughed the light-hearted girl.

'Yes, I think it would indeed, Annie. Do you think you could manage the rest of it yourself now?'

'Yes, oh yes, I can do that easy,' was the willing response; and, burning with impatient curiosity, Euphie retired to the room to examine the contents of the box.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LATE-LEARNED WISDOM.

THE key turned in the lock as if it had been recently oiled, and, raising the lid, Euphie beheld another box, smaller, but of the same make and pattern, and ornamented with the same grotesque Japanese dragons. She lifted it out and tried to open it, but it was locked hard and fast. Now, what could [illegible] Lyn have hid so carefully in this sealed box? And where could she have kept the key of it?

For days after this, Euphie searched every nook and cranny she could think of in the hope of finding the little key, till, despairing of its recovery, she put the box away within the other again, unable to conquer her disinclination to break it up. Perhaps she might find a key at some time that would fit it, perhaps the relations she had advertised for in the Banff papers might open it for themselves when they turned up.

But weeks passed, and months, without answer to the inquiries for the relatives of Nannie Lyn, and Euphie retained possession of the furniture of the house, together with some thirty odd pounds which she discovered hidden away in the locker of Nannie's chest. This she

deposited in the bank to accumulate interest for any heirs to Mrs. Lyn who might turn up later on, wondering why the old woman could have lived so miserably, literally starving herself, with plenty at hand to buy comfort. It was not in Euphie to comprehend Nannie's strange nature, warped and twisted and turned from its natural intention by an overmastering passion for the possession of money—not to use and enjoy and give, but to have and to hold—gloating over its possession till heart and soul shrivelled and shrank within the compass of this one idea, till the thread of life itself snapped with the long tension of its preservation.

Yes, Nannie had been always an incomprehensible woman; but Euphie was glad to put the disagreeable memory as far from her as she could, for other and stronger considerations began to crowd upon her.

The long summer and autumn had passed, and December, bleak and stormy, blew white drift across the fields when Euphie's babe was born.

'A fine bairn, a bonnie bairn, a laddie,' was the kindly neighbour's comment on the new arrival; but Euphie turned her face to the wall and wept to think of the joy this might have been.

Nevertheless, her heart yearned over the child, and warmed to him none the less for the daily growing resemblance he bore to Andrew Craig. She felt she owed him double love and double duty, nor would she allow herself to fret or grieve lest he should be wronged by it. Her heart, her life, was as full now as it ever could be, and already she had begun to plan a journey

to some foreign land—to America, or elsewhere—to some spot where the child could be brought up away from the possible knowledge of his father.

She had taken the house again from Martinmas; and the child, whom she had named William Hertzman, in memory of Dr. Wilhelm, was seven months old when she went by train into Aberdeen one day in July, taking Annie with her. She had resolutely set her foot upon her trouble, had risen above it, and with her boy to occupy her thoughts, was in better health than she had been since she left Edinburgh.

'I will leave you here with the baby,' she said to Annie in the waiting-room at the station. 'I want to make some purchases, and he will be too heavy for us to carry even between us all the way. Besides, I may have to climb some long stairs, so you can rest here and take care of him till I come back.'

She was meditating the possibility of getting a ship sailing from Aberdeen to New York in which to take out a passage, and for that purpose was walking along in the direction of a shipping office, when, at a street corner a familiar voice called out—

'Gude bless me, lassie!' Turning, she beheld Thomas Mathers, in his ordinary sea-going garb.

Her first instinctive impulse was to flee, but she stood limp and helpless while Thomas advanced and held out his hand.

'Whaever would hae thocht o' rinnin' up again' you here, Euphie?' he said cheerily; but, noting her white face and embarrassed manner,

he added kindly, 'C'wa doon the street here a bit; there's a restaurant there whaur we can gang in and hae a crack.'

She went with him without a word, nor did either speak until they were shown into an enclosed compartment of the restaurant, where they sat down and looked at each other.

'And how have you been this long time, Thomas? Are there any good shots going just now? Are you doing well yourself?' began Euphie, pouring out questions with feverish haste.

'No' sae bad ava, thank God for His mercies. They've been some splendid shots this last fortnight, an' of coorse there'll be a great ootcry aboot the great hauls o' siller thae wastrel fishers get, an' them aye in poverty. Jock Tamson, there, got fifty pound to his ain deal last week, the first he's gotten this six month, an' ye ken last year he lost a' his nets, an' the new anes are a' to pay for. I'm thinkin' by the time he pays for his nets an' his bow-tows, an' the bark, an' mak's up for keepin' six o' a family a' winter, an' naethin' comin' in, his fifty pound 'll no' see the end o' the week.'

'That's the truth, Thomas. When fisher-folk get, all the countryside are agape over a hundred-pound shot, but there is no consideration for the long weeks and months, and sometimes years, of little or no success, which mortgages it all before it comes,' said Euphie sympathetically.

'But, my lassie, what aboot yoursel'?' inquired Thomas, with significance.

'I see you know all about it, Thomas,' she answered, bracing up for the inevitable inter-

view; 'but, please, don't say a word about anything connected with *him.* I have struggled hard, and got over it, and I don't want to open a half-healed wound. Tell me just about yourself, Thomas, and all the folk of Inweerie.'

Thomas stared at her and ran his fingers through his hair. Then he leant his folded arms upon the table and looked long and earnestly into her face. His own was bronzed and weather-beaten; his auburn hair was back from his broad white brow; his fair beard showed white here and there against the red kerchief tied about his neck inside his blue sleeve waistcoat, and he looked very much older than when she had seen him last. But his blue eyes shone upon her, and a tear glimmered in them as he looked.

'Euphie, my lass,' he said at length, 'ye've made an awfu' mistak'. I'm thinkin' ye've broken baith your ain heart an' Andrae Craig's too.'

'Thomas, I won't listen to that name,' she said, with angry firmness. 'If you want me to speak to you at all, you must respect my feelings.'

'Feelin's! Eh, lassie, gang awa' straucht hame to Andrae Craig an' beg his pardon on your bended knees for your cruelty in dootin' sic a man.'

Euphie looked at him, and a sudden flash of intelligence lit up her face.

'I beg your pardon, Thomas; I see you don't know the truth. I left Andrew Craig in Edinburgh with the wife he married in Melbourne. He deceived me, Thomas.'

'A' a mistak', my dear,' returned Thomas calmly,—'a' a mistak'. It wasna your man;

it was anither Andrae Craig a'thegither that woman was after. She sailed awa' back on the ship she cam' on.'

Euphie started up with a wild gesture, and seized Thomas by both shoulders.

'Thomas Mathers, what are you saying?'

'I'm sayin' it was a terrible mistak', an' ower rash o' ye—though, mind ye, as I said to Andrae when he tell't me, I could quite understand it. But he canna—he's an altered man, Euphie, I maun tell ye that.' Thomas's earnestness carried conviction to her.

Her arms slipped from his shoulders, and fell upon the table like dead things, and she bowed her head upon them in silence.

Thomas, as he watched her, whisked one and another tear from his eyes before he laid his hands upon her again.

'Ay, my lass, it was a pity—a sair pity; be thankfu' ye're spared to mak' amends. It would hae been terrible if death had ta'en that consolation frae ye.'

'Thomas,' she said, lifting her haggard, wild face,—'Thomas, tell me all about it. I—I am stunned—I cannot take it in. That woman told me he had been at the diggings, and had been robbed, and his arm hurt—exactly the same. Oh, Thomas, Thomas! what have I done?'

'Ah, weel, I suppose ye were driven daft at the thocht o't; but what I wonder at was hoo ye could believe sic a thing o' *him*. Did ye no' consider hoo perfectly impossible it was for a man o' that kind to play the villain? What's the gude o' love if there's no' perfect faith an' confidence as weel?'

Euphie groaned, and rocked herself to and fro in her repentance and self-abasement. Thomas was right, she ought to have trusted as well as loved.

'Tell me what happened, Thomas. What did he say? What did he do? Why did he never seek after me when he saw I had been so mistaken?'

'What? Ye little ken Andrae if ye think he would seek after a woman that had sae little faith in him as that. I couldna blame him, though I tried hard to mak' him think mair plousibly. It seems he cam' hame as usual, and the first thing he wondered what way ye werena doon the street to meet him.'

'Oh, oh!' moaned the repentant woman.

'An' when he opened the door there was a bit laddie rampagin' up an' doon the hall, an' he concluded that Mary Scott an' her bairns had come to see ye. But when he gaed in an' saw the strange woman, he glowered at her an' she at him, an' he says, "Where's my wife?"

'"I'm here waitin' for my husband," says the woman; and Andrae lookit, an' began to think he had pappit into the wrang hoose. But there was everything a' richt, an' in a state o' wonderment he gaed awa' ben the hoose lookin' for ye; but, of coorse, nae wife o' his was there.

'"Has Mrs. Craig gone out?" he speired at the woman, comin' ben again.

'"Mrs. Craig—I'm Mrs. Craig," says the woman; and, of coorse, Andrae couldna think what the woman could mean, till she says, "What's your name, sir?"

'"Craig is my name," says he. "But where is my wife? And who are you?"

'"Is your name Andrae Craig?" she says.

'"It is," says Andrae; and the woman lookit as if he had shot her.

'"But *you* are not my husband!" she cried oot.

'"An' I should think not," Andrae says, with a laugh; an' the woman she bursts oot a-greetin', sayin' hoo she had made a terrible mistak' somehoo, an' tells him the hale story.

'"I knew the man you mean," says he; "he is at the diggings yet for anything I know, and he did get his arm hurt, but he didn't lose it as I lost mine—the two stories must have got mixed up. But how did you follow me here?"

'Weel, then, she tell't him hoo a sailor she met in her sister's had said hoo an Andrae Craig had gane hame on their ship, an' that he had mentioned that he was gaun straucht to Leven.'

Euphie here covered her face with her hands and moaned aloud, remembering that happy home-coming.

'And then,' continued Thomas, 'she ferreted oot hoo you had come to Edinburgh, and got your address through the Post Office, and there was the whole thing clear. But it was some letter you left that finished Andrae; he said it strack him like a death-blow to see ye hadna the slightest doubt that he was capable o' sic a villany, so he just lockit up the hoose, wi' everything just as ye left it, an' took lodgin's in Edinburgh near his wark. He cam' back the next day for his claes, but he's never set fit in the hoose frae that day to this.'

'Thomas, what am I to do?' cried Euphie, looking at him with piteous appeal.

'Do? There's nae choice in the maitter. Gang to Edinburgh the very first train. There's ane leaves here in aboot an hoor. As for me, I maun awa' doon to the boat. We ran in at Law Point here to see if we could get a better price for oor herrin' than farther doon, but little did I expeck to fa' in wi' you. I'm glad an' thankfu' that I did, though; an' I advise ye just to set aff, for ye canna pit things richt a meenit ower sune. Life is ower short for hesitation at its finger-posts.'

While he spoke, Euphie sat wringing her hands in vain regret.

'Give me his address, Thomas. I'll take your advice and go. He cannot say worse to me than I deserve. As you say, I ought to have trusted him.'

Thomas gave her the address.

'Noo, my lass, awa' ye go, and God gae wi' ye. An' tak' ye a word frae an auld freend. When ance ye hae love, see ye cherish it. In some natures it's just slain wi' a stroke like this; in ithers, again, it languishes lang an' is hard to kill, in spite o' thae cruel speeches an' cuttin' sarcasms that folk tak' sic a deevilish delight in stabbin' their dearest wi'. But wi' every stab love bleeds an' grows weaker, an' then the very ane that's killed it thinks he's sair wranged because it's gane for ever. Eh, lassie, mony a time I think we're just like a wheen bairns in this world, playin' wi' edge tools, an' greetin' when we cut oorsel's; an' just when we've lived lang enough to learn hoo to value life's blessin's, Death chaps at the door, an' awa' we maun go, an' alas for a' oor late-learned wisdom!'

CHAPTER XXVII.

'COULD HE STILL LOVE HER?'

A PLEASANT, benevolent-faced woman opened the door of Andrew's lodgings to Euphie.

'Mr. Craig lodges here, I believe?' said Euphie.

'He does that,' responded the landlady, with a heartiness that said much for her opinion of her lodger.

'Is he in now?'

'No; but I expect him in every minute. It's no' often he gangs oot after tea.'

'Then I would like to go in and wait, if you have no objections. I—I am his wife.'

'His wife! I never kent he had ane,' said the woman in astonishment; but she opened the door wide and let Euphie pass in, evidently favourably impressed with her appearance and that of the child.

'This is his room, and that's his bedroom aff o't there, so ye can just sit doon an' mak' yersel' comfortable till he comes,' the woman said genially; and Euphie, with a strange feeling of curiosity and dread, looked round upon her husband's abiding-place. The landlady went out

and shut the door, and Euphie burst into a fit of weeping. To think that she should have driven him out from their own pretty home with her unwifely distrust! To think he had scorned to live in the house she had furnished so comfortably, and left to him with such magnanimity! Thomas Mathers' words sounded in her ears as she thought of it all. Oh, what if his love was dead? What if he lived with her in the future for the child's sake and for duty only? Would it not be just what she deserved? Yes, ah yes! —but how could she endure it?

The baby began to fret, and, loosening his outer wraps, she fed him from her breast, and he fell sound asleep in her lap.

'Better just lay it down upon the bed in here,' said the landlady, who entered, bringing the evening paper.

Euphie followed her into the bedroom and laid the sleeping child upon the bed, and the landlady brought in a shawl, and after covering him up retired again.

The paper lay untouched upon the table, although a staring announcement of something startling was visible from where she sat. What was happening for good or evil in the world was nothing to her until this one great question was answered, 'Could he still love her?'

She became nervous and fidgety as the minutes passed, and when more than once the front-door opened and shut again, she put her hand upon her heart and gasped as in mortal sickness.

At length she heard the landlady say,—

'There's a lady waiting for you, Mr. Craig.'

'A lady!' she heard him answer in surprise;

and the next moment Andrew opened the door and shut it behind him.

He started and grew white as death as he recognised her, and she rose, trembling; but he only strode forward and threw himself into the easy-chair, and shaded his eyes with his hand.

Euphie too sat down, unable to stand up. She glanced across the hearth at him, and her heart melted within her as she noted how changed he was, how thin his hands, how sunken his cheek. And she had done this—she who loved him!

'Andrew!—oh, my husband, forgive me!' she cried out, dropping on her knees at his feet, unable to bear this terrible silence any longer.

He looked at her stonily, and turned his head slightly away from her, resting his elbow upon the chair-arm and his chin in his palm.

'Andrew, speak to me—I did not know—I did not stop to think—oh'—

She stopped short in her pleading, for he again turned, looking into her eyes with stony reproach, and it struck her dumb. Yes, love was dead! She had killed the faithful love of years with her base mistrust! What remained now worth living for? Oh, if he would but speak to her!

She leant back from him, and hid her face in her hands, unable to bear his steadfast gaze. He sat watching her in silence, a smouldering fire kindling in his eyes, the stern regard softening slowly, a smile of tenderness dawning on his features.

He put forth his hand to draw her towards him, when a plaintive cry made him pause; and Euphie, starting up, darted into the bedroom. Andrew rose hastily and took a step forward

and stood stockstill, the colour flashing into his face as though he had been a girl of fourteen.

For Euphie emerged from the bedroom, holding in her arms a dark-eyed, curly-haired cherub, dimpled and rosy with sleep, and imploringly held it up to him.

'Love *him* if you cannot forgive me!' she cried; but Andrew, with a muffled cry, caught them both to his breast and held them there.

'Nay, forgive me, my wife,' he said, and he could say no more.

About a fortnight after this, when Euphie had left the North country and returned to her own house in Edinburgh, Andrew sat at the fireside reading and gently rocking the cradle with his foot.

'See, Andrew,' said Euphie, entering the apartment with the japanned tin box in her hand, 'here is the box I told you about last night—the box I surprised Mrs. Lyn building into the wall that awful morning.'

'Ah!' responded Andrew, taking it from her hand and examining it with interest.

'Look, I can open this one, but for this other inside there is no key, nor could I find one for it anywhere in the house.'

'But, my darling, don't you see that the one key fits both locks? The box is smaller, but the lock is the same size. There, you see!'

'Well, how simple! and I rummaged everywhere, high and low, to find a key for that box, and all the time'—

Andrew had raised the lid, revealing a little packet neatly tied about with a narrow blue ribbon.

'Andrew, it feels like sacrilege. These must have been Mrs. Lyn's old love-letters she was hiding away, for fear any one should read them.'

Andrew shook his head, and smiled with amused toleration.

'I cannot credit you with being a great judge of character, wifie mine,' he remarked, undoing the ribbon. 'Nannie Lyn was hardly the kind of woman to hoard up love-letters. Had it been *you*—but here goes!'

He unrolled the outside paper, and a packet of bank-notes was revealed.

'Good gracious, Andrew!'

'Very pretty love-letters, are they not?' he quizzed, as he spread them out—bank-notes all!

'A thousand pounds!' gasped Euphie, when he had counted them.

'A thousand pounds!' echoed Andrew, with business-like gravity.

'And *this* was what she was hiding and hoarding all the time! *This* was what she sacrificed comfort and health and life for! What shall we do with them, dear?'

'Put them in the fire, of course.'

'The fire! Andrew, are you out of your senses? A thousand pounds of good money!'

'A thousand pounds!—all waste paper, my wife. See, it is eight years since that bank failed—its affairs were all wound up long ago. It must have failed—let me see—just after Nannie went into that North-country seclusion. If she had used the money even then, the notes might have been cashed; as it is, they are only fit for the fire.'

'A thousand pounds!' murmured Euphie,

looking dreamily at the paper, whose value had died away from it.

'And here is something else—a letter, I think,' said Andrew, carefully picking out with his pencil what seemed to be a mere lining to the bottom of the box. It was part of a letter, faded, and so worn at the creases that it threatened to fall asunder. The top and bottom of it was torn away. Evidently Nannie had lessened it in order to fold it up as a neat and compact lining for the bottom of the box, fitting it to the size.

The writing was dim, but Andrew managed to decipher it, being written in a large, bold hand.

'This cheque for one thousand pounds you can cash at the bank already named. Let the child want for nothing which money can buy, and I will see you and make arrangements for the future when I return from India. I give you this large sum at once as a guarantee of how you will be paid. I have called her Euphemie Marguerite Hertzman—Euphemie after my mother, and Marguerite Hertzman after her own mother. I know you will be good to the child, and as you deal by her may God so deal with you. About that room'—

Here the letter was torn, and Andrew looked up to find Euphie's eyes large with tears. He laid down the paper and drew her down upon his knee and kissed her tenderly.

'Do you know, my dear, this does not surprise me a bit? After you told me, over in Leven yonder, about Madame Hertzman and the strange fancy she took to you, I had always an idea that you were the daughter of her lost Marguerite. I said nothing about what I thought then; but did it never strike you yourself that it might be so?'

'Never—I never dreamed of such a thing.'

'Ah, well, dear, never mind. The past is past, but the present is ours to mould a future on as far as we may. There, look at that little rascal! Wide-awake, I declare, and grinning consumedly with these solitary four teeth of his!'

This same wakerife rascal had grown to be a little lad in all the elation of first trousers when Thomas Mathers stepped in one evening from Inweerie to pay them a visit. Thomas did not seem well, and there was a pathetic look of weariness in his eyes—a weariness less of the body than of the soul. The sensitive poetic nature, with its lifelong hunger for sympathy and congenial friendship unappeased, with the shadow of the wolf never lifting from his door-step, had at last grown weary of the ignoble struggle for mere existence. He had begun to think of the long release as a thing sweet and desirable; he found a pensive pleasure in dreaming of a higher, fairer, fuller life than earth had ever afforded him.

Both Andrew and Euphie noted the change, and a vague pang of regret smote them, and made their welcome more warm and their speech more tender.

'Thought you had forsaken us altogether, Tammas,' said Andrew; and Euphie, with kindly fuss, shook up the cushions in the easy-chair to make them soft for him.

'Eh, lassie, I've rowed on the thafts ower lang to think o' saft seats,' quoth Thomas, sitting restfully down nevertheless, and, with a jaunty defiance of care, quoting from one of his own poems—

'When dreepin' an' weary I come frae the sea,
Wi' little reward for my toil,
I'm cheered wi' the wee things that climb on my knee,
An' the smirk o' my cheery wife's smile.

'My frugal meal past, an' my dry suit put on,
Then doon to my books an' my lore;
My dwelling, though humble, I'll barter wi' nane,
An' I'll sing "while I tug at the oar."'

Something in his manner brought a lump into Euphie's throat as she smiled down upon him. There was a book sticking out of the side-pocket of his pea jacket, and she playfully tapped it with her finger.

'What have you been reading on the way up to Edinburgh?'

'Oo, no' muckle. That's just an auld translation o' Virgil I bocht at a second-hand book-shop as I cam' daunderin' doon the street. My, what a singer he was! Man, Andrae, I aye keep thinkin' an' wonderin' if thae imperishable speerits 'll keep on soarin' an' singin' in the next warld as they did in this, an' if a puir humble worshipper o' theirs micht maybe touch the hem o' their celestial garments. Wha kens?'

'It's my opinion they will,' said Andrew cheerfully; 'but there's plenty time to think o' that for mony a lang year yet, Tammas.'

Thomas shook his head mournfully.

'Na, Andrae. The sun's wearin' low i' the wast, an' I ken the shadows lengthenin' mair an' mair every day. The sense o' failure hings heavy an' grows on me the aulder I get. My dreams are a' by; I feel life has been ower muckle for me, though I've tried to do my best, an' aye made inclination subject to duty. But

this life's no' a', an', thank the Lord, "the day's aye fair in the Land o' the Leal."'

'Tammas, Tammas!' cried Euphie, in vehement protest, as she drew in the table and laid the cloth, 'I'll not listen if you sit and speak of yourself like that. Tell us all the news about Inweerie. How's Jamie Scott and Jenny? And Mary—how is she?'

Euphie piled on the questions, one after the other, in hot haste—anything to dispel the feeling of sadness which hovered over them, in spite of their joy at seeing him again.

'Oh, they're a' weel, an' the men folk a' ta'en up plannin' the grand new harbour. It'll cost them seventeen thoosan' pound, an' Government 'll no' gie them a bawbee to help; but, faith! they'll build it theirsel's, an' kind thanks to naebody. Ye'll no' hae heard aboot Tam Gowans?'

'No. What about him?' said both, with lively interest.

'It seems he's sent word that he got anither promotion, an' had marrit some captain's young widow—a leddy wi' plenty siller.'

'Well done Tom!' said Andrew heartily; but Euphie pondered as she set the tea, and the flicker of the fire danced ruddily on her cheek. Tom had been a sore spot on her conscience, and it relieved her to think he had not been inconsolable.

They were very happy these three old friends that evening, the last they ever spent together, for when the poet returned to Inweerie it was to go home to God.

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