

# GEORGE MACDONALD

WARLOCK O'  
GLENWARLOCK: A  
HOMELY ROMANCE

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# **George MacDonald**

## **Warlock o' Glenwarlock: A Homely Romance**

### **CHAPTER I.**

### **CASTLE WARLOCK**

A rough, wild glen it was, to which, far back in times unknown to its annals, the family had given its name, taking in return no small portion of its history, and a good deal of the character of its individuals. It lay in the debatable land between highlands and lowlands; most of its inhabitants spoke both Scotch and Gaelic; and there was often to be found in them a notable mingling of the chief characteristics of the widely differing Celt and Teuton. The country produced more barley than wheat, more oats than barley, more heather than oats, more boulders than trees, and more snow than anything. It was a solitary, thinly peopled region, mostly of bare hills, and partially cultivated glens, each with its small stream, on the banks of which grew here and there a silver birch, a mountain ash, or an alder tree, but with nothing capable of giving much shade or shelter, save cliffy banks and big stones. From many a spot you might look in all directions and not see a sign of human or any other habitation. Even then however, you might, to be sure, most likely smell the perfume—to some nostrils it is nothing less than perfume—of a peat fire, although you might be long in finding out whence it came; for the houses, if indeed the dwellings could be called houses, were often so hard to be distinguished from the ground on which they were built, that except the smoke of fresh peats were coming pretty freely from the wide-mouthed chimney, it required an experienced eye to discover the human nest. The valleys that opened northward produced little; there the snow might some years be seen lying on patches of oats yet green, destined now only for fodder; but where the valley ran east and west, and any tolerable ground looked to the south, there things put on a different aspect. There the graceful oats would wave and rustle in the ripening wind, and in the small gardens would lurk a few cherished strawberries, while potatoes and peas would be tolerably plentiful in their season.

Upon a natural terrace in such a slope to the south, stood Castle Warlock. But it turned no smiling face to the region whence came the warmth and the growth. A more grim, repellant, unlovely building would be hard to find; and yet, from its extreme simplicity, its utter indifference to its own looks, its repose, its weight, and its gray historical consciousness, no one who loved houses would have thought of calling it ugly. It was like the hard-featured face of a Scotch matron, suggesting no end of story, of life, of character: she holds a defensive if not defiant face to the world, but within she is warm, tending carefully the fires of life. Summer and winter the chimneys of that desolate-looking house smoked; for though the country was inclement, and the people that lived in it were poor, the great, sullen, almost unhappy-looking hills held clasped to their bare cold bosoms, exposed to all the bitterness of freezing winds and summer hail, the warmth of household centuries: their peat-bogs were the store-closets and wine-cellars of the sun, for the hoarded elixir of physical life. And although the walls of the castle, as it was called, were so thick that in winter they kept the warmth generated within them from wandering out and being lost on the awful wastes of homeless hillside and moor, they also prevented the brief summer heat of the wayfaring sun from entering with freedom, and hence the fires were needful in the summer days as well—at least at the time my story commences, for then, as generally, there were elderly and aged people in the house, who had to help their souls to keep their bodies warm.

The house was very old. It had been built for more kinds of shelter than need to be thought of in our days. For the enemies of our ancestors were not only the cold, and the fierce wind, and the rain, and the snow; they were men also—enemies harder to keep out than the raging storm or the creeping

frost. Hence the more hospitable a house could be, the less must it look what it was: it must wear its face haughty, and turn its smiles inward. The house of Glenwarlock, as it was also sometimes called, consisted of three massive, narrow, tall blocks of building, which showed little connection with each other beyond juxtaposition, two of them standing end to end, with but a few feet of space between, and the third at right angles to the two. In the two which stood end to end, and were originally the principal parts, hardly any windows were to be seen on the side that looked out into the valley; while in the third, which, though looking much of the same age, was of later build, were more windows, but none in the lowest story. Narrow as were these buildings, and four stories high, they had a solid, ponderous look, suggesting a thickness of the walls such as to leave little of a hollow within for the indwellers—like great marine shells for a small mollusk. On the other side was a kind of a court, completed by the stables and cowhouses, and towards this court were most of the windows—many of them for size more like those in the cottages around, than suggestive of a house built by the lords of the soil. The court was now merely that of a farmyard.

There must have been at one time outer defences to the castle, but they were no longer to be distinguished by the inexperienced eye; and indeed the windowless walls of the house itself seemed strong enough to repel any attack without artillery—except indeed the assailants had got into the court. There were however some signs of the windows there having been enlarged if not increased at a later period.

In the block that stood angle-wise to the rest, was the kitchen, the door of which opened immediately on the court; and behind the kitchen, in that part which had no windows to the valley, was the milk-cellar, as they called the dairy, and places for household storage. A rough causeway ran along the foot of the walls, connecting the doors in the different blocks. Of these, the kitchen door for the most part stood open: sometimes the snow would be coming fast down the wide chimney, with little soft hisses in the fire, and the business of the house going on without a thought of closing it, though from it you could not have seen across the yard for the falling flakes.

But when my story opens, the summer held the old house and the older hills in its embrace. The sun was pouring torrents of light and heat into the valley, and the slopes of it were covered with green. The bees were about, contenting themselves with the flowers, while the heather was getting ready its bloom for them, and a boy of fourteen was sitting in a little garden that lay like a dropped belt of beauty about the feet of the grim old walls. This was on the other side—that to the south, parting the house from the slope where the corn began—now with the ear half-formed. The boy sat on a big stone, which once must have had some part in the house itself, or its defences, but which he had never known except as a seat for himself. His back leaned against the hoary wall, and he was in truth meditating, although he did not look as if he were. He was already more than an incipient philosopher, though he could not yet have put into recognizable shape the thought that was now passing through his mind. The bees were the primary but not the main subject of it. It came thus: he thought how glad the bees would be when their crop of heather was ripe; then he thought how they preferred the heather to the flowers; then, that the one must taste nicer to them than the other; and last awoke the question whether their taste of sweet was the same as his. "For," said he, "if their honey is sweet to them with the same sweetness with which it is sweet to me, then there is something in the make of the bee that's the same with the make of me; and perhaps then a man might some day, if he wanted, try the taste of being a bee all out for a little while." But to see him, nobody would have thought he was doing anything but basking in the sun. The scents of the flowers all about his feet came and went on the eddies of the air, paying my lord many a visit in his antechamber, his brain; the windy noises of the insects, the watery noises of the pigeons, the noises from the poultry yard, the song of the mountain river, visited, him also through the portals of his ears; but at the moment, the boy seemed lost in the mere fundamental satisfaction of existence.

Neither, although broad summer was on the earth, and all the hill-tops, and as much of the valleys as their shadows did not hide, were bathed in sunlight, although the country was his native



land, and he loved it with the love of his country's poets, was the consciousness of the boy free from a certain strange kind of trouble connected with, if not resulting from the landscape before him. A Celt through many of his ancestors, and his mother in particular, his soul, full of undefined emotion, was aware of an ever recurring impulse to song, ever checked and broken, ever thrown back upon itself. There were a few books in the house, amongst them certain volumes of verse—a copy of Cowly, whose notable invocation of Light he had instinctively blundered upon; one of Milton; the translated Ossian; Thomson's Seasons—with a few more; and from the reading of these, among other results, had arisen this—that, in the midst of his enjoyment of the world around him, he found himself every now and then sighing after a lovelier nature than that before his eyes. There he read of mountains, if not wilder, yet loftier and more savage than his own, of skies more glorious, of forests of such trees as he knew only from one or two old engravings in the house, on which he looked with a strange, inexplicable reverence: he would sometimes wake weeping from a dream of mountains, or of tossing waters. Once with his waking eyes he saw a mist afar off, between the hills that ramparted the horizon, grow rosy after the sun was down, and his heart filled as with the joy of a new discovery. Around him, it is true, the waters rushed well from their hills, but their banks had little beauty. Not merely did the want of trees distress him, but the nature of their channel; most of them, instead of rushing through rocks, cut their way only through beds of rough gravel, and their bare surroundings were desolate without grandeur—almost mean to eyes that had not yet pierced to the soul of them. Nor had he yet learned to admire the lucent brown of the bog waters. There seemed to be in the boy a strain of some race used to a richer home; and yet all the time the frozen regions of the north drew his fancy tenfold more than Italy or Egypt.

His name was Cosmo, a name brought from Italy by one of the line who had sold his sword and fought for strangers. Not a few of the younger branches of the family had followed the same evil profession, and taken foreign pay—chiefly from poverty and prejudice combined, but not a little in some cases from the inborn love of fighting that seems to characterize the Celt. The last soldier of them had served the East India Company both by sea and land: tradition more than hinted that he had chiefly served himself. Since then the heads of the house had been peaceful farmers of their own land, contriving to draw what to many farmers nowadays would seem but a scanty subsistence from an estate which had dwindled to the twentieth part of what it had been a few centuries before, though even then it could never have made its proprietor rich in anything but the devotion of his retainers.

Growing too hot between the sun and the wall, Cosmo rose, and passing to the other side of the house beyond the court-yard, and crossing a certain heave of grass, came upon one unfailing delight in his lot—a preacher whose voice, inarticulate, it is true, had, ever since he was born, been at most times louder in his ear than any other. It was a mountain stream, which, through a channel of rock, such as nearly satisfied his most fastidious fancy, went roaring, rushing, and sometimes thundering, with an arrow-like, foamy swiftness, down to the river in the glen below. The rocks were very dark, and the foam stood out brilliant against them. From the hill-top above, it came, sloping steep from far. When you looked up, it seemed to come flowing from the horizon itself, and when you looked down, it seemed to have suddenly found it could no more return to the upper regions it had left too high behind it, and in disgust to shoot headlong to the abyss. There was not much water in it now, but plenty to make a joyous white rush through the deep-worn brown of the rock: in the autumn and spring it came down gloriously, dark and fierce, as if it sought the very centre, wild with greed after an absolute rest.

The boy stood and gazed, as was his custom. Always he would seek this endless water when he grew weary, when the things about him put on their too ordinary look. Let the aspect of this be what it might, it seemed still inspired and sent forth by some essence of mystery and endless possibility. There was in him an unusual combination of the power to read the hieroglyphic internal aspect of things, and the scientific nature that bows before fact. He knew that the stream was in its second stage when it rose from the earth and rushed past the house, that it was gathered first from the great ocean,

through millions of smallest ducts, up to the reservoirs of the sky, thence to descend in snows and rains, and wander down and up through the veins of the earth; but the sense of its mystery had not hitherto begun to withdraw. Happily for him, the poetic nature was not merely predominant in him, but dominant, sending itself, a pervading spirit, through the science that else would have stifled him. Accepting fact, he found nothing in its outward relations by which a man can live, any more than by bread; but this poetic nature, illuminating it as with the polarized ray, revealed therein more life and richer hope. All this was as yet however as indefinite as it was operative in him, and I am telling of him what he could not have told of himself.

He stood gazing now in a different mood from any that had come to him before: he had begun to find out something fresh about this same stream, and the life in his own heart to which it served as a revealing phantasm. He recognized that what in the stream had drawn him from earliest childhood, with an infinite pleasure, was the vague sense, for a long time an ever growing one, of its MYSTERY—the form the infinite first takes to the simplest and liveliest hearts. It was because it was ALWAYS flowing that he loved it, because it could not stop: whence it came was utterly unknown to him, and he did not care to know. And when at length he learned that it came flowing out of the dark hard earth, the mystery only grew. He imagined a wondrous cavity below in black rock, where it gathered and gathered, nobody could think how—not coming from anywhere else, but beginning just there, and nowhere beyond. When, later on, he had to shift its source, and carry it back to the great sky, it was no less marvellous, and more lovely; it was a closer binding together of the gentle earth and the awful withdrawing heavens. These were a region of endless hopes, and ever recurrent despairs: that his beloved, an earthly finite thing, should rise there, was added joy, and gave a mighty hope with respect to the unknown and appalling. But from the sky, he was sent back to the earth in further pursuit; for, whence came the rain, his books told him, but from the sea? That sea he had read of, though never yet beheld, and he knew it was magnificent in its might; gladly would he have hailed it as an intermediate betwixt the sky and the earth—so to have the sky come first! but, alas! the ocean came first in order. And then, worse and worse! how was the ocean fed but from his loved torrent? How was the sky fed but from the sea? How was the dark fountain fed but from the sky? How was the torrent fed but from the fountain? As he sat in the hot garden, with his back against the old gray wall, the nest of his family for countless generations, with the scent of the flowers in his nostrils, and the sound of the bees in his ears, it had begun to dawn upon him that he had lost the stream of his childhood, the mysterious, infinite idea of endless, inexplicable, original birth, of outflowing because of essential existence within! There was no production any more, nothing but a mere rushing around, like the ring-sea of Saturn, in a never ending circle of formal change! Like a great dish, the mighty ocean was skimmed in particles invisible, which were gathered aloft into sponges all water and no sponge; and from this, through many an airy, many an earthy channel, deflowered of its mystery, his ancient, self-producing fountain to a holy merry river, was FED—only FED! He grew very sad, and well he might. Moved by the spring eternal in himself, of which the love in his heart was but a river-shape, he turned away from the deathened stream, and without knowing why, sought the human elements about the place.



## CHAPTER II. THE KITCHEN

He entered the wide kitchen, paved with large slabs of slate. One brilliant gray-blue spot of sunlight lay on the floor. It came through a small window to the east, and made the peat-fire glow red by the contrast. Over the fire, from a great chain, hung a three-legged pot, in which something was slowly cooking. Between the fire and the sun-spot lay a cat, content with fate and the world. At the corner of the fire sat an old lady, in a chair high-backed, thick-padded, and covered with striped stuff. She had her back to the window that looked into the court, and was knitting without regarding her needles. This was Cosmo's grandmother. The daughter of a small laird in the next parish, she had started in life with an overweening sense of her own importance through that of her family, nor had she lived long enough to get rid of it. I fancy she had clung to it the more that from the time of her marriage nothing had seemed to go well with the family into which she had married. She and her husband had struggled and striven, but to no seeming purpose; poverty had drawn its meshes closer and closer around them. They had but one son, the present laird, and he had succeeded to an estate yet smaller and more heavily encumbered. To all appearance he must leave it to Cosmo, if indeed he left it, in no better condition. From the growing fear of its final loss, he loved the place more than any of his ancestors had loved it, and his attachment to it had descended yet stronger to his son.

But although Cosmo the elder wrestled and fought against encroaching poverty, and with little success, he had never forgot small rights in anxiety to be rid of large claims. What man could he do to keep his poverty from bearing hard on his dependents, and never master or landlord was more beloved. Such being his character and the condition of his affairs, it is not very surprising that he should have passed middle age before thinking seriously of marriage. Nor did he then fall in love, in the ordinary sense of the phrase; he reflected with himself that it would be cowardice so far to fear poverty as to run the boat of the Warlocks aground, and leave the scrag end of a property and a history without a man to take them up, and possibly bear them on to redemption; for who could tell what life might be in the stock yet! Anyhow, it would be better to leave an heir to take the remnant in charge, and at least carry the name a generation farther, even should it be into yet deeper poverty than hitherto. A Warlock could face his fate. Thereupon, with a sense of the fitness of things not always manifested on such occasions, he had paid his addresses to a woman of five and thirty, the daughter of the last clergyman of the parish, and had by her been accepted with little hesitation. She was a capable and brave woman, and, fully informed of the state of his affairs, married him in the hope of doing something to help him out of his difficulties. A few pounds she had saved up, and a trifle her mother had left her, she placed unreservedly at his disposal, and he in his abounding honesty spent it on his creditors, bettering things for a time, and, which was of much more consequence, greatly relieving his mind, and giving the life in him a fresh start. His marriage was of infinitely more salvation to the laird than if it had set him free from all his worldly embarrassments, for it set him growing again—and that is the only final path out of oppression.

Whatever were the feelings with which he took his wife home, they were at least those of a gentleman; and it were a good thing indeed, if, at the end of five years, the love of most pairs who marry for love were equal to that of Cosmo Warlock to his middle-aged wife; and now that she was gone, his reverence for her memory was something surpassing. From the day almost of his marriage the miseries of life lost half their bitterness, nor had it returned at her death. Instinctively he felt that outsiders, those even who respected him as an honest man, believed that, somehow or other, they could only conjecture how, he must be to blame for the circumstances he was in—either this, or providence did not take care of the just man. Such was virtually the unuttered conclusion of many, who nevertheless imagined they understood the Book of Job, and who would have counted Warlock's

rare honesty, pride or fastidiousness or unjustifiable free-handedness. Hence they came to think and speak of him as a poor creature, and soon the man, through the keen sensitiveness of his nature, became aware of the fact. But to his sense of the misprision of neighbours and friends, came the faith and indignant confidence of his wife like the closing and binding up and mollifying of a wound with ointment. The man was of a far finer nature than any of those who thus judged him, of whom some would doubtless have got out of their difficulties sooner than he—only he was more honorable in debt than they were out of it. A woman of strong sense, with an undeveloped stratum of poetry in the heart of it, his wife was able to appreciate the finer elements of his nature; and she let him see very plainly that she did. This was strength and a lifting up of the head to the husband, who in his youth had been oppressed by the positiveness, and in his manhood by the opposition, of his mother, whom the neighbours regarded as a woman of strength and faculty. And now, although, all his life since, he had had to fight the wolf as constantly as ever, things, even after his wife's death, continued very different from what they had been before he married her; his existence looked a far more acceptable thing seen through the regard of his wife than through that of his neighbours. They had been five years married before she brought him an heir to his poverty, and she lived five years more to train him—then, after a short illness, departed, and left the now aging man virtually alone with his little child, coruscating spark of fresh vitality amidst the ancient surroundings. This was the Cosmo who now, somewhat sore at heart from the result of his cogitations, entered the kitchen in search of his kind.

Another woman was sitting on a three-legged stool, just inside the door, paring potatoes—throwing each, as she cut off what the old lady, watching, judged a paring far too thick, into a bowl of water. She looked nearly as old as her mistress, though she was really ten years younger. She had come with the late mistress from her father's house, and had always taken, and still took her part against the opposing faction—namely the grandmother.

A second seat—not over easy, but comfortable enough, being simply a wide arm-chair of elm, with a cushion covered in horse-hair, stood at the opposite corner of the fire. This was the laird's seat, at the moment, as generally all the morning till dinner-time, empty: Cosmo, not once looking up, walked straight to it, diagonally across the floor, and seated himself like one verily lost in thought. Now and then, as she peeled, Grizzie would cast a keen glance at him out of her bright blue eyes, round whose fire the wrinkles had gathered like ashes: those eyes were sweet and pleasant, and the expression of her face was one of lovely devotion; but otherwise she was far from beautiful. She gave a grim smile to herself every time she glanced up at him from her potatoes, as much as to say she knew well enough what he was thinking, though no one else did. "He'll be a man yet!" she said to herself.

The old lady also now and then looked over her Stocking at the boy, where he sat with his back to the white deal dresser, ornate with homeliest dishes.

"It'll be lang or ye fill that chair, Cossie, my man!" she said at length,—but not with the smile of play, rather with the look of admonition, as if it was the boy's first duty to grow in breadth in order to fill the chair, and restore the symmetry of the world.

Cosmo glanced up, but did not speak, and presently was lost again in the thoughts from which his grandmother had roused him as one is roused by a jolt on the road.

"What are you dreaming about, Cossie?" she said again, in a tone wavering but imperative.

Her speech was that of a gentlewoman of the old time, when the highest born in Scotland spoke Scotch.

Not yet did Cosmo reply. Reverie does not agree well with manners, but it would besides have been hard for him to answer the old lady's question—not that he did not know something at least of what was going on in his mind, but that, he knew instinctively, it would have sounded in her ears no hair better than the jabber of Jule Sandy.

"Mph!" she said, offended at his silence; "Ye'll hae to learn manners afore ye're laird o' Glenwarlock, young Cosmo!"

A shadow of indignation passed over Grizzie's rippled, rather than wrinkled face, but she said nothing. There was a time to speak and a time to be silent; nor was Grizzie indebted to Solomon, but to her own experience and practice, for the wisdom of the saw. Only the pared potatoes splashed louder in the water as they fell. And the old lady knew as well what that meant, as if the splashes had been articulate sounds from the mouth of the old partisan.

The boy rose, and coming forward, rather like one walking in his sleep, stood up before his grandmother, and said,

"What was ye sayin', gran'mamma?"

"I was sayin' what ye wadna hearken till, an that's enough," she answered, willing to show offence.

"Say 't again, gran'mamma, if you please. I wasna noticin'."

"Na! Is' warran' ye frae noticin'! There ye winna gang, whaur yer ain fule fancy does na lead the w'y. Cosmo, by gie ower muckle tether to wull thought, an' someday ye'll be laid i' the dub, followin' what has naither sense intil't, nor this warl's gude. —What was ye thinkin' about the noo?—Tell me that, an' Is' lat ye gang."

"I was thinkin' about the burnie, gran'mamma."

"It wad be tellin' ye to lat the burnie rin, an' stick to yer buik, laddie!"

"The burnie wull rin, gran'mamma, and the buik 'ill bide," said Cosmo, perhaps not very clearly understanding himself.

"Ye're gettin' on to be a man, noo," said his grandmother, heedless of the word of his defence, "an' ye maun learn to put awa' bairnly things. There's a heap depen'in' upo' ye, Cosmo. Ye'll be the fift o' the name i' the family, an' I'm feart ye may be the last. It's but sma' honour, laddie, to ony man to be the last; an' gien ye dinna gaither the wit ye hae, and du the best ye can, ye winna lang be laird o' Glenwarlock. Gien it wasna for Grizzie there, wha has no richt to overhear the affairs o' the family, I micht think the time had come for enlichtenin' ye upo' things it's no shuitable ye should gang ignorant o'. But we'll put it aff till a mair convenient sizzon, atween oor ain twa lanes."

"An' a mair convanient spokesman, I houp, my leddy," said Grizzie, deeply offended.

"An' wha sud that be?" rejoined her mistress.

"Ow, wha but the laird himsel'?" answered Grizzie, "Wha's to come atween father an' son wi' licht upo' family-affairs? No even the mistress hersel' wad hae prezhunt upo' that?"

"Keep your own place, Grizzie," said the old lady with dignity.

And Grizzie, who, had gone farther in the cause of propriety, than propriety itself could justify, held her peace. Only the potatoes splashed yet louder in the bowl. Her mistress sat grimly silent, for though she had had the last word and had been obeyed, she was rebuked in herself. Cosmo, judging the specialty of the interview over, turned and went back to his father's chair; but just as he was seating himself in it, his father appeared in the doorway.

The form was that of a tall, thin man, a little bent at the knees and bowed in the back, who yet carried himself with no small dignity, cloaked in an air of general apology—as if he would have said, "I am sorry my way is not yours, for I see very well how wrong you must think it." He wore large strong shoes—I think a description should begin with the feet rather than the head—fit for boggy land; blue, ribbed, woollen stockings; knee-breeches of some home-made stuff: all the coarser cloth they wore, and they wore little else, was shorn from their own sheep, and spun, woven, and made at home; an old blue dress coat with bright buttons; a drab waistcoat which had once been yellow; and to crown all, a red woollen nightcap, hanging down on one side with a tassel.

"Weel, Grizzie!" he said, in a gentle, rather sad voice, as if the days of his mourning were not yet ended, "I'm ower sune the day!"

He never passed Grizzie without greeting her, and Grizzie's devotion to him was like that of slave and sister mingled.

"Na, laird," she answered, "ye can never be ower sune for yer ain fowk, though ye may be for yer ain stamack. The taties winna be lang bilin' the day. They're some sma'."

"That's because you pare them so much, Grizzie," said the grandmother.

Grizzie vouchsafed no reply.

The moment young Cosmo saw whose shadow darkened the doorway, he rose in haste, and standing with his hand upon the arm of the chair, waited for his father to seat himself in it. The laird acknowledged his attention with a smile, sat down, and looked like the last sitter grown suddenly old. He put out his hand to the boy across the low arm of the chair, and the boy laid his hand in his father's, and so they remained, neither saying a word. The laird leaned back, and sat resting. All were silent.

Notwithstanding the oddity of his dress, no one who had any knowledge of humanity could have failed to see in Cosmo Warlock, the elder, a high bred gentleman. His face was small, and the skin of it was puckered into wrinkles innumerable; his mouth was sweet, but he had lost his teeth, and the lips had fallen in; his chin, however, was large and strong; while his blue eyes looked out from under his narrow high forehead with a softly piercing glance of great gentleness and benignity. A little gray hair clustered about his temples and the back of his head—the red nightcap hid the rest. There was three days' growth of gray beard on his chin, for NOW THAT HE HAD NOBODY, he would say, he had not the heart to shave every morning.

For some time he sat looking straight before him, smiling to his mother's hands as they knitted, she casting on him now and then a look that seemed to express the consciousness of blame for not having made a better job of him, or for having given him too much to do in the care of himself. For neither did his mother believe in him farther than that he had the best possible intentions in what he did, or did not do. At the same time she never doubted he was more of a man than ever his son would be, seeing they had such different mothers.

"Grizzie," said the laird, "hae ye a drappy o' soor milk? I'm some dry."

"Ay, that hae I, sir!" answered Grizzie with alacrity, and rising went into the darker region behind the kitchen, whence presently she emerged with a white basin full of rich milk—half cream, it was indeed. Without explanation or apology she handed it to her master, who received and drank it off.

"Hoots, woman!" he said, "ye wad hae me a shargar (A SKIN-AND-BONE CALF)! That's no soor milk!"

"I'm vexed it's no to yer taste, laird!" returned Grizzie coolly, "but I hae nane better."

"Ye tellt me ye had soor milk," said the laird—without a particle of offence, rather in the tone of apology for having by mistake made away with something too good for him.

"Weel, laird," replied Grizzie, "it's naething but the guidman's milk; an' gien ye dinna ken what's guid for ye at your time o' life, it's weel there sud be anither 'at does. What has a man o' your 'ears to du drinkin' soor milk—eneuch to turn a' soor thegither i' the inside o' ye! It's true I win' ye weel a sma' bairn i' my leddy's airms—

"Ye may weel du that!" interrupted her mistress.

"I wasna weel intil my teens, though, my leddy!" returned Grizzie. "An' I'm sure," she added, in revenge for the insinuation as to her age, "it wad ill become ony wuman to grudge a man o' the laird's stan'in a drap o' the best milk in's ain cellar!"

"Who spoke of refusing it to him?" said his mother.

"Ye spak yersel' sic an' siclike," answered Grizzie.

"Hoots, Grizzie! haud yer tongue, my wuman," said the laird, in the gentlest tone, yet with reproof in it. "Ye ken weel it's no my mother wad grudge me the milk ye wad gie me. It was but my'sel' 'at didna think mysel' worthy o' that same, seein' it's no a week yet sin' bonny Hawkie dee'd!"

"An' wad ye hae the Lord's anintit depen' upo' Hawkie?" cried Grizzie with indignation.

The contest went no farther, and Grizzie had had the best of it, as none knew better than she. In a minute or two the laird rose and went out, and Cosmo went with him.

Before Cosmo's mother died, old Mrs. Warlock would have been indignant at the idea of sitting in the kitchen, but things had combined to bring her to it. She found herself very lonely seated in state in the drawing-room, where, as there was no longer a daughter-in-law to go and come, she learned little or nothing of what was doing about the place, and where few that called cared to seek her out, for she had never been a favourite with the humbler neighbours. Also, as time went on, and the sight of money grew rarer and rarer, it became more desirable to economize light in the winter. They had not come to that with firing, for, as long as there were horses and intervals of less labour on the farm, peats were always to be had—though at the same time, the drawing-room could not be made so warm as the kitchen. But for light, even for train-oil to be burned in the simplest of lamps, money had to be paid—and money was of all ordinary things the seldomest seen at Castle Warlock. From these operative causes it came by degrees, that one winter, for the sake of company, of warmth, of economy, Mistress Warlock had her chair carried to the kitchen; and the thing once done, it easily and naturally grew to a custom, and extended itself to the summer as well; for she who had ceased to stand on ceremony in the winter, could hardly without additional loss of dignity reascend her pedestal only because it was summer again. To the laird it was a matter of no consequence where he sat, ate, or slept. When his wife was alive, wherever she was, that was the place for him; when she was gone, all places were the same to him. There was, besides, that in the disposition of the man which tended to the homely:—any one who imagines that in the least synonymous with the coarse, or discourteous, or unrefined, has yet to understand the essentials of good breeding. Hence it came that the other rooms of the house were by degrees almost neglected. Both the dining-room and drawing-room grew very cold, cold as with the coldness of what is dead; and though he slept in the same part of the house by choice, not often did the young laird enter either. But he had concerning them, the latter in particular, a notion of vastness and grandeur; and along with that, a vague sense of sanctity, which it is not quite easy to define or account for. It seems however to have the same root with all veneration for place—for if there were not a natural inclination to venerate place, would any external reason make men capable of it? I think we shall come at length to feel all places, as all times and all spaces, venerable, because they are the outcome of the eternal nature and the eternal thought. When we have God, all is holy, and we are at home.

## CHAPTER III. THE DRAWING-ROOM

As soon as they were out of the kitchen-door, the boy pushed his hand into his father's; the father grasped it, and without a word spoken, they walked on together. They would often be half a day together without a word passing between them. To be near, each to the other, seemed enough for each.

Cosmo had thought his father was going somewhere about the farm, to see how things were getting on; but, instead of crossing to the other side of the court, where lay the sheds and stables, etc., or leaving it by the gate, the laird turned to the left, and led the way to the next block of building, where he stopped at a door at the farther end of the front of it. It was a heavy oak door, studded with great broad iron knobs, arranged in angular patterns. It was set deep in the thick wall, but there were signs of there having been a second, doubtless still stronger, flush with the external surface, for the great hooks of the hinges remained, with the deep hole in the stone on the opposite side for the bolt. The key was in the lock, for, except to open the windows, and do other necessary pieces of occasional tendance, it was seldom anybody entered the place, and Grizzie generally turned the key, and left it in the lock. She would have been indignant at the assertion, but I am positive it was not ALWAYS taken out at night. In this part of the castle were the dining and drawing rooms, and immediately over the latter, a state bedroom in which nobody had slept for many years.

It was into a narrow passage, no wider than itself, the door led. From this passage a good-sized hall opened to the left—very barely furnished, but with a huge fireplace, and a great old table, that often had feasted jubilant companies. The walls were only plastered, and were stained with damp. Against them were fixed a few mouldering heads of wild animals—the stag and the fox and the otter—one ancient wolf's-head also, wherever that had been killed. But it was not into this room the laird led his son. The passage ended in a stone stair that went up between containing walls. It was much worn, and had so little head-room that the laird could not ascend without stooping. Cosmo was short enough as yet to go erect, but it gave him always a feeling of imprisonment and choking, a brief agony of the imagination, to pass through the narrow curve, though he did so at least twice every day. It was the oldest-looking thing about the place—that staircase.

At the top of it, the laird turned to the right, and lifted the latch—all the doors were latched—of a dark-looking door. It screamed dismally as it opened. He entered and undid a shutter, letting an abiding flash of the ever young light of the summer day into the ancient room. It was long since Cosmo had been in it before. The aspect of it affected him like a withered wall-flower.

It was a well-furnished room. A lady with taste must at one time at least have presided in it—but then withering does so much for beauty—and that not of stuffs and THINGS only! The furniture of it was very modern compared with the house, but not much of it was younger than the last James, or Queen Anne, and it had all a stately old-maidish look. Such venerable rooms have been described, and painted, and put on the stage, and dreamed about, tens of thousands of times, yet they always draw me afresh as if they were as young as the new children who keep the world from growing old. They haunt me, and if I miss them in heaven, I shall have one given me. On the floor was an old, old carpet, wondrously darned and skilfully patched, with all its colours faded into a sweet faint ghost-like harmony. Several spider-legged, inlaid tables stood about the room, but most of the chairs were of a sturdier make, one or two of rich carved work of India, no doubt a great rarity when first brought to Glenwarlock. The walls had once had colour, but it was so retiring and indistinct in the little light that came through the one small deep-set window whose shutter had been opened, that you could not have said what it was. There were three or four cabinets—one of them old Japanese; and on a table a case of gorgeous humming birds. The scarlet cloth that covered the table was faded to a dirty orange, but the birds were almost as bright as when they darted like live jewels through the tropical



sunlight. Exquisite as they were however, they had not for the boy half the interest of a faded old fire-screen, lovelily worked in silks, by hands to him unknown, long ago returned to the earth of which they were fashioned. A variety of nick-nacks and ornaments, not a few of which would have been of value in the eyes of a connoisseur, crowded the chimney-piece—which stood over an iron grate with bulging bars, and a tall brass fender. How still and solemn-quiet it all was in the middle of the great triumphant sunny day—like some far-down hollow in a rock, the matrix of a gem! It looked as if it had done with life—as much done with life as if it were a room in Egyptian rock, yet was it full of the memories of keenest life, and Cosmo knew there was treasure upon treasure of wonder and curiosity hid in those cabinets, some of which he had seen, and more he would like to see. But it was not to show him any of these that his father had now brought him to the room.

Not once yielding the right hand of the boy which was clasped to and in his own, the laird closed the door of the room, and advancing the whole length of it, stopped at a sofa covered with a rich brocade, and seating himself thereon, slowly, and with a kind of care, drew him between his thin knees, and began to talk to him. Now there was this difference between the relation of these two and that of most fathers and sons, that, thus taken into solemn solitude by his old father, the boy felt no dismay, no sense of fault to be found, no troubled expectation of admonition. Reverence and love held about equal sway in his feeling towards his father. And while the grandmother looked down on Cosmo as the son of his mother, for that very reason his father in a strange lovely way revered his boy: the reaction was utter devotion.

Cosmo stood and looked in his father's eyes—their eyes were of the same colour.—that bright sweet soft Norwegian blue—his right hand still clasped in his father's left, and his left hand leaning gently on his father's knee. Then, as I say, the old man began to talk to the young one. A silent man ordinarily, it was from no lack of the power of speech, for he had a Celtic gift of simple eloquence.

"This is your birthday, my son."

"Yes, papa."

"You are now fourteen."

"Yes, papa."

"You are growing quite a man."

"I don't know, papa."

"So much of a man, at least, my Cosmo, that I am going to treat you like a man this day, and tell you some things that I have never talked about to any one since your mother's death.—You remember your mother, Cosmo?"

This question he was scarcely ever alone with the boy without asking—not from forgetfulness, but from the desire to keep the boy's remembrance of her fresh, and for the pure pleasure of talking of her to the only one with whom it did not seem profane to converse concerning his worshipped wife.

"Yes, papa, I do."

The laird always spoke Scotch to his mother, and to Grizzie also, who would have thought him seriously offended had he addressed her in book-English; but to his Marion's son he always spoke in the best English he had, and Cosmo did his best in the same way in return.

"Tell me what you remember about her," said the old man.

He had heard the same thing again and again from the boy, yet every time it was as if he hoped and watched for some fresh revelation from the lips of the lad—as if, truth being one, memory might go on recalling, as imagination goes on foreseeing.

"I remember," said the boy, "a tall beautiful woman, with long hair, which she brushed before a big, big looking-glass."

The love of the son, kept alive by the love of the husband, glorifying through the mists of his memory the earthly appearance of the mother, gave to her the form in which he would see her again, rather than that in which he had actually beheld her. And indeed the father saw her after the same fashion in the memory of his love. Tall to the boy of five, she was little above the middle height,

yet the husband saw her stately in his dreams; there was nothing remarkable in her face except the expression, which after her marriage had continually gathered tenderness and grace, but the husband as well as the children called her absolutely beautiful.

"What colour were her eyes, Cosmo?"

"I don't know; I never saw the colour of them; but I remember they looked at me as if I should run into them."

"She would have died for you, my boy. We must be very good that we may see her again some day."

"I will try. I do try, papa."

"You see, Cosmo, when a woman like that condescends to be wife to one of us and mother to the other, the least we can do, when she is taken from us, is to give her the same love and the same obedience after she is gone as when she was with us. She is with her own kind up in heaven now, but she may be looking down and watching us. It may be God lets her do that, that she may see of the travail of her soul and be satisfied—who can tell? She can't be very anxious about me now, for I am getting old, and my warfare is nearly over; but she may be getting things ready to rest me a bit. She knows I have for a long time now been trying to keep the straight path, as far as I could see it, though sometimes the grass and heather has got the better of it, so that it was hard to find. But YOU must remember, Cosmo, that it is not enough to be a good boy, as I shall tell her you have always been: you've got to be a good man, and that is a rather different and sometimes a harder thing. For, as soon as a man has to do with other men, he finds they expect him to do things they ought to be ashamed of doing themselves; and then he has got to stand on his own honest legs, and not move an inch for all their pushing and pulling; and especially where a man loves his fellow man and likes to be on good terms with him, that is not easy. The thing is just this, Cosmo—when you are a full-grown man, you must be a good boy still—that's the difficulty. For a man to be a boy, and a good boy still, he must be a thorough man. The man that's not manly can never be a good boy to his mother. And you can't keep true to your mother, except you remember Him who is father and mother both to all of us. I wish my Marion were here to teach you as she taught me. She taught me to pray, Cosmo, as I have tried to teach you—when I was in any trouble, just to go into my closet, and shut to the door, and pray to my Father who is in secret—the same Father who loved you so much as to give you my Marion for a mother. But I am getting old and tired, and shall soon go where I hope to learn faster. Oh, my boy! hear your father who loves you, and never do the thing you would be ashamed for your mother or me to know. Remember, nothing drops out; everything hid shall be revealed. But of all things, if ever you should fail or fall, don't lie still because you are down: get up again—for God's sake, for your mother's sake, for my sake—get up and try again.

"And now it is time you should know a little about the family of which you come. I don't doubt there have been some in it who would count me a foolish man for bringing you up as I have done, but those of them who are up there don't. They see that the business of life is not to get as much as you can, but to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with your God—with your mother's God, my son. They may say I have made a poor thing of it, but I shall not hang my head before the public of that country, because I've let the land slip from me that I couldn't keep any more than this weary old carcase that's now crumbling away from about me. Some would tell me I ought to shudder at the thought of leaving you to such poverty, but I am too anxious about yourself, my boy, to think much about the hardships that may be waiting you. I should be far more afraid about you if I were leaving you rich. I have seen rich people do things I never knew a poor gentleman do. I don't mean to say anything against the rich—there's good and bad of all sorts; but I just can't be so very sorry that I am leaving you to poverty, though, if I might have had my way, it wouldn't have been so bad. But he knows best who loves best. I have struggled hard to keep the old place for you; but there's hardly an acre outside the garden and close but was mortgaged before I came into the property. I've been all my life trying to pay off, but have made little progress. The house is free, however, and the garden;

and don't you part with the old place, my boy, except you see you OUGHT. But rather than anything not out and out honest, anything the least doubtful, sell every stone. Let all go, if you should have to beg your way home to us. Come clean, my son, as my Marion bore you."

Here Cosmo interrupted his father to ask what MORTGAGED meant. This led to an attempt on the part of the laird to instruct him in the whole state of the affairs of the property. He showed him where all the papers were kept, and directed him to whom to go for any requisite legal advice. Weary then of business, of which he had all his life had more than enough, he turned to pleasanter matters, and began to tell him anecdotes of the family.

"What in mercy can hae come o' the laird, think ye, my leddy?" said Grizzie to her mistress. "It's the yoong laird's birthday, ye see, an' they aye haud a colloquin' thegither upo' that same, an' I kenna whaur to gang to cry them till their dinner."

"Run an' ring the great bell," said the grandmother, mindful of old glories.

"Deed, Is' du naething o' the kin'," said Grizzie to herself; "it's eneuch to raise a regiment—gien it camna doon upo' my heid."

But she had her suspicion, and finding the great door open, ascended the stair.

The two were sitting at a table, with the genealogical tree of the family spread out before them, the father telling tale after tale, the son listening in delight. I must confess, however—let it tell against the laird's honesty as it may—that, his design being neither to glorify his family, nor to teach records, but to impress all he could find of ancestral nobility upon his boy, he made a choice, and both communicated and withheld. So absorbed were they, that Grizzie's knock startled them both a good deal.

"Yer denners is ready, laird," she said, standing erect in the doorway.

"Verra weel, Grizzie, I thank ye," returned the laird.—"Cosmo, we'll take a walk together this evening, and then I'll tell you more about that brother of my grandfather's. Come along to dinner now.—I houp ye hae something in honour o' the occasion, Grizzie," he added in a whisper when he reached the door, where the old woman waited to follow them.

"I teuk it upo' me, laird," answered Grizzie in the same tone, while Cosmo was going down the stair, "to put a cock an' a leek thegither, an' they'll be nane the waur that ye hae keepit them i' the pot a whilie langer.—Cosmo," she went on when they had descended, and overtaken the boy, who was waiting for them at the foot, "the Lord bless ye upo' this bonnie day! An' may ye be aye a comfort to them 'at awes ye, as ye hae been up to this present."

"I houp sae, Grizzie," responded Cosmo humbly; and all went together to the kitchen.

There the table was covered with a clean cloth of the finest of homespun, and everything set out with the same nicety as if the meal had been spread in the dining-room. The old lady, who had sought to please her son by putting on her best cap for the occasion, but who had in truth forgot what day it was until reminded by Grizzie, sat already at the head of the table, waiting their arrival. She made a kind speech to the boy, hoping he would be master of the place for many years after his father and she had left him. Then the meal commenced. It did not last long. They had the soup first, and then the fowl that had been boiled in it, with a small second dish of potatoes—the year's baby Kidneys, besides those Grizzie had pared. Delicate pancakes followed—and dinner was over—except for the laird, who had a little toddy after. But as yet Cosmo had never even tasted strong drink—and of course he never desired it. Leaving the table, he wandered out, pondering some of the things his father had been telling him.

## CHAPTER IV. AN AFTERNOON SLEEP

Presently, without having thought whither he meant to go, he found himself out of sight of the house—in a favourite haunt, but one in which he always had a peculiar feeling of strangeness and even expatriation. He had descended the stream that rushed past the end of the house, till it joined the valley river, and followed the latter up, to where it took a sudden sharp turn, and a little farther. Then he crossed it, and was in a lonely nook of the glen, with steep braes about him on all sides, some of them covered with grass, others rugged and unproductive. He threw himself down in the clover, a short distance from the stream, and straightway felt as if he were miles from home. No shadow of life was to be seen. Cottage-chimney nor any smoke was visible—no human being, no work of human hands, no sign of cultivation except the grass and clover.

Now whether it was that in childhood he had learned that here he was beyond his father's land, or that some early sense of loneliness in the place had been developed by a brooding fancy into a fixed feeling, I cannot well say; but certainly, as often as he came—and he liked to visit the spot, and would sometimes spend hours in it—he felt like a hermit of the wilderness cut off from human society, and was haunted with a vague sense of neighbouring hostility. Probably it came of an historical fancy that the nook ought to be theirs, combined with the sense that it was not. But there had been no injury done *ab extra*: the family had suffered from the inherent moral lack of certain of its individuals.

This sense of away-from-homeness, however, was not strong enough to keep Cosmo from falling into such a dreamful reverie as by degrees naturally terminated in slumber. Seldom is sleep far from one who lies on his back in the grass, with the sound of waters in his ears. And indeed a sleep in the open air was almost an essential ingredient of a holiday such as Cosmo had been accustomed to make of his birthday: constantly active as his mind was, perhaps in part because of that activity, he was ready to fall asleep any moment when warm and supine.

When he woke from what seemed a dreamless sleep, his half roused senses were the same moment called upon to render him account of something very extraordinary which they could not themselves immediately lay hold of. Though the sun was yet some distance above the horizon, it was to him behind one of the hills, as he lay with his head low in the grass; and what could the strange thing be which he saw on the crest of the height before him, on the other side of the water? Was it a fire in a grate, thinned away by the sunlight? How could there be a grate where there was neither house nor wall? Even in heraldry the combination he beheld would have been a strange one. There stood in fact a frightful-looking creature half consumed in light—yet a pale light, seemingly not strong enough to burn. It could not be a phoenix, for he saw no wings, and thought he saw four legs. Suddenly he burst out laughing, and laughed that the hills echoed. His sleep-blinded eyes had at length found their focus and clarity.

"I see!" he said, "I see what it is! It's Jeames Grade's coo 'at's been loupin' ower the mune, an's stucken upo' 't!"

In very truth there was the moon between the legs of the cow! She did not remain there long however, but was soon on the cow's back, as she crept up and up in the face of the sun. He bethought him of a couplet that Grizzie had taught him when he was a child:

Whan the coo louns ower the mune, The reid gowd rains intil men's shune.

And in after-life he thought not unfrequently of this odd vision he had had. Often, when, having imagined he had solved some difficulty of faith or action, presently the same would return in a new shape, as if it had but taken the time necessary to change its garment, he would say to himself with a sigh, "The coo's no ower the mune yet!" and set himself afresh to the task of shaping a handle on the infinite small enough for a finite to lay hold of. Grizzie, who was out looking for him, heard the roar

of his laughter, and, guided by the sound, spied him where he lay. He heard her footsteps, but never stirred till he saw her looking down upon him like a benevolent gnome that had found a friendless mortal asleep on ground of danger.

"Eh, Cosmo, laddie, ye'll get yer deid o' caul'!" she cried. "An' preserve's a'! what set ye lauchin' in sic a fearsome fashion as yon? Ye're surely no fey!"

"Na, I'm no fey, Grizzie! Ye wad hae lauchen yersel' to see Jeames Gracie's coo wi' the mune atween the hin' an' the fore legs o' her. It was terrible funny."

"Hoots! I see naething to lauch at i' that. The puir coo cudna help whaur the mune wad gang. The haivenly boadies is no to be restricket."

Again Cosmo burst into a great laugh, and this time Grizzie, seriously alarmed lest he should be in reality fey, grew angry, and seizing hold of him by the arm, pulled lustily.

"Get up, I tell ye!" she cried. "Here's the laird speirin' what's come o' ye, 'at ye come na hame to yer tay."

But Cosmo instead of rising only laughed the more, and went on until at length Grizzie made use of a terrible threat.

"As sure's sowens!" she said, "gien ye dinna haud yer tongue wi' that menseless-like lauchin', I'll no tell ye anither auld-warld tale afore Marti'mas."

"Will ye tell me ane the nicht gien I haud my tongue an' gang hame wi' ye?"

"Ay, that wull I—that's gien I can min' upo' ane."

He rose at once, and laughed no more. They walked home together in the utmost peace.

After tea, his father went out with him for a stroll, and to call on Jeames Gracie, the owner of the cow whose inconstellation had so much amused him. He was an old man, with an elderly wife, and a grand-daughter—a weaver to trade, whose father and grandfather before him had for many a decade done the weaving work, both in linen and wool, required by "them at the castle." He had been on the land, in the person of his ancestors, from time almost immemorial, though he had only a small cottage, and a little bit of land, barely enough to feed the translunar cow. But poor little place as Jeames's was, if the laird would have sold it the price would have gone a good way towards clearing the rest of his property of its encumbrances. For the situation of the little spot was such as to make it specially desirable in the eyes of the next proprietor, on the border of whose land it lay. He was a lord of session, and had taken his title from the place, which he inherited from his father; who, although a laird, had been so little of a gentleman, that the lordship had not been enough to make one of his son. He was yet another of those trim, orderly men, who will sacrifice anything—not to beauty—of that they have in general no sense—but to tidiness: tidiness in law, in divinity, in morals, in estate, in garden, in house, in person—tidiness is in their eyes the first thing—seemingly because it is the highest creative energy of which they are capable. Naturally the dwelling of James Gracie was an eyesore to this man, being visible from not a few of his windows, and from almost anywhere on the private road to his house; for decidedly it was not tidy. Neither in truth was it dirty, while to any life—loving nature it was as pleasant to know, as it was picturesque to look at. But the very appearance of poverty seems to act as a reproach on some of the rich—at least why else are they so anxious to get it out of their sight?—and Lord Lickmyloof—that was not his real title, but he was better known by it than by the name of his land: it came of a nasty habit he had, which I need not at present indicate farther—Lord Lickmyloof could not bear the sight of the cottage which no painter would have consented to omit from the landscape. It haunted him like an evil thing.

## CHAPTER V. THE SCHOOL

The next morning, by the steep farm road, and the parish road, which ran along the border of the river and followed it downward, Cosmo, on his way to school, with his books in a green baize bag, hung by the strings over his shoulder, came out from among the hills upon a comparative plain. But there were hills on all sides round him yet—not very high—few of them more than a couple of thousand feet—but bleak and bare, even under the glow of the summer sun, for the time of heather was not yet, when they would show warm and rich to the eye of poet and painter. Most of the farmers there, however, would have felt a little insulted by being asked to admire them at any time: whatever their colour or shape or product, they were incapable of yielding crops and money! In truth many a man who now admires, would be unable to do so, if, like those farmers, he had to struggle with nature for little more than a bare living. The struggle there, what with early, long-lasting, and bitter winters, and the barrenness of the soil in many parts, was a severe one.

Leaving the river, the road ascended a little, and joined the highway, which kept along a level, consisting mostly of land lately redeemed from the peat-moss. It went straight for two miles, fenced from the fields in many parts by low stone walls without mortar, abhorrent to the eye of Cosmo; in other parts by walls of earth, called dykes, which delighted his very soul. These were covered with grass for the vagrant cow, sprinkled with loveliest little wild flowers for the poet-peasant, burrowed in by wild bees for the adventurous delight of the honey-drawn school-boy. Glad I am they had not quite vanished from Scotland before I was sent thither, but remained to help me get ready for the kingdom of heaven: those dykes must still be dear to my brothers who have gone up before me. Some of the fields had only a small ditch between them and the road, and some of them had no kind of fence at all. It was a dreary road even in summer, though not therefore without its loveable features—amongst which the dykes; and wherever there is anything to love, there is beauty in some form.

A short way past the second milestone, he came to the first straggling houses of the village. It was called Muir of Warlock, after the moor on which it stood, as the moor was called after the river that ran through it, and that named after the glen, which took its name from the family—so that the Warlocks had scattered their cognomen all around them. A somewhat dismal-looking village it was—except to those that knew its people: to some of such it was beautiful—as the plainest face is beautiful to him who knows a sweet soul inside it. The highway ran through it—a broad fine road, fit for the richest country under the sun; but the causeway along its edges, making of it for the space a street, was of the poorest and narrowest. Some of the cottages stood immediately upon the path, some of them receded a little. They were almost all of one story, built of stone, and rough-cast-harled, they called it there, with roofs of thick thatch, in which a half smothered pane of glass might hint at some sort of room beneath. As Cosmo walked along, he saw all the trades at work; from blacksmith to tailor, everybody was busy. Now and then he was met by a strong scent, as of burning leather, from the oak-bark which some of the housewives used for fuel, after its essence had been exhausted in the tan-pit, but mostly the air was filled with the odour of burning peat. Cosmo knew almost everybody, and was kindly greeted as he went along—none the less that some of them, hearing from their children that he had not been to school the day before, had remarked that his birthday hardly brought him enough to keep it with. The vulgarity belonging to the worship of Mammon, is by no means confined to the rich; many of these, having next to nothing, yet thought profession the one thing, money, houses, lands the only inheritances. It is a marvel that even world-loving people should never see with what a load they oppress the lives of the children to whom, instead of bringing them up to earn their own living, and thus enjoy at least THE GAME of life, they leave a fortune enough to sink a devil yet deeper in hell. Was it nothing to Cosmo to inherit a long line of ancestors whose story he knew—their virtues,



their faults, their wickedness, their humiliation?—to inherit the nobility of a father such as his? the graciousness of a mother such as that father caused him to remember her? Was there no occasion for the laird to rejoice in the birth of a boy whom he believed to have inherited all the virtues of his race, and left all their vices behind? But none of the villagers forgot, however they might regard the holiday, that Cosmo was the "yoong laird" notwithstanding the poverty of his house; and they all knew that in old time the birthday of the heir had been a holiday to the school as well as to himself, and remembered the introduction of the change by the present master. Indeed, throughout the village, although there were not a few landed proprietors in the neighbourhood whose lands came nearer, all of whom of course were lairds, and although the village itself had ceased to belong to the family, Glenwarlock was always called *the* laird; and the better part in the hearts of even the money-loving and money-trusting among its inhabitants, honoured him as the best man in the country, "thof he hed sae little skeel at haudin' his ain nest thegither;" and though, besides, there is scarce a money-making man who does not believe poverty the cousin, if not the child of fault; and the more unscrupulous, *within the law*, a man has been in making his money, the more he regards the man who seems to have lost the race he has won, as somehow or other to blame: "People with naught are naughty." Nor is this judgment confined to the morally unscrupulous. Few who are themselves permitted to be successful, care to conjecture that it may be the will of the power, that in part through their affairs, rules men, that some should be, in that way, unsuccessful: better can be made of them by preventing the so-called success. Some men rise with the treatment under which others would sink. But of the inhabitants of Muir of Warlock, only a rather larger proportion than of the inhabitants of Mayfair would have taken interest in such a theory of results.

They all liked, and those who knew him best, loved the young laird; for if he had no lands, neither had he any pride, they said, and was as happy sitting with any old woman, and sharing her tea, as at a lord's table. Nor was he less of a favourite at school, though, being incapable of self-assertion, his inborn consciousness of essential humanity rendering it next to impossible for him to *claim* anything, some of the bigger boys were less than friendly with him. One point in his conduct was in particular distasteful to them: he seemed to scorn even an honest advantage. For in truth he never could bring himself, in the small matters of dealing that pass between boys at school, to make the least profit. He had a passion for fair play, which, combined with love to his neighbour, made of an advantage, though perfectly understood and recognized, almost a physical pain: he shrank from it with something like disgust. I may not, however, conceal my belief, that there was in it a rudimentary tinge of the pride of those of his ancestors who looked down upon commerce, though not upon oppression, or even on robbery. But the true man will change to nobility even the instincts derived from strains of inferior moral development in his race—as the oyster makes, they say, of the sand-grain a pearl.

Greeting the tailor through his open window, where he sat cross-legged on his table, the shoemaker on his stool, which, this lovely summer morning, he had brought to the door of his cottage, and the smith in his nimbus of sparks, through the half-door of his smithy, and receiving from each a kindly response, the boy walked steadily on till he came to the school. There, on the heels of the master, the boys and girls were already crowding in, and he entered along with them. The religious preliminaries over, consisting in a dry and apparently grudging recognition of a sovereignty that required the homage, and the reading of a chapter of the Bible in class, the SECULAR business was proceeded with; and Cosmo was sitting with his books before him, occupied with a hard passage in Caesar, when the master left his desk and came to him.

"You'll have to make up for lost time to-day, Cosmo," he said.

Now if anything was certain to make Cosmo angry, it was the appearance, however slight, or however merely implied, of disapproval of anything his father thought, or did, or sanctioned. His face flushed, and he answered quickly,

"The time wasn't lost, sir."

This reply made the master in his turn angry, but he restrained himself.

"I'm glad of that! I may then expect to find you prepared with your lessons for to-day."

"I learned my lessons for yesterday," Cosmo answered; "but my father says it's no play to learn lessons."

"Your father's not master of this school."

"He's maister o' me," returned the boy, relapsing into the mother-tongue, which, except it be spoken in good humour, always sounds rude.

The master took the youth's devotion to his father for insolence to himself.

"I shall say no more," he rejoined, still using the self-command which of all men an autocrat requires, "till I find how you do in your class. That you are the best scholar in it, is no reason why you should be allowed to idle away hours in which you might have been laying up store for the time to come."—It was a phrase much favoured by the master—in present application foolish.—"But perhaps your father does not mean to send you to college?"

"My father hasna said, an' I haena speirt," answered Cosmo, with his eyes on his book.

Still misinterpreting the boy, the conceit and ill-temper of the master now overcame him, and caused him to forget the proprieties altogether.

"Haud on that gait, laddie, an' ye'll be as great a fule as yer father himsel'," he said.

Cosmo rose from his seat, white as the wall behind him, looked in the master's eyes, caught up his Caesar, and dashed the book in his face. Most boys would then have made for the door, but that was not Cosmo's idea of bearing witness. The moment the book left his hand, he drew himself up, stood still as a statue, looked full at the master, and waited. Not by a motion would he avoid any consequence of his act.

He had not long to wait. A corner of the book had gone into the master's eye; he clapped his hand to it, and for a moment seemed lost in suffering. The next, he clenched for the boy a man's fist, and knocked him down. Cosmo fell backward over the form, struck his head hard on the foot of the next desk, and lay where he fell.

A shriek arose, and a girl about sixteen came rushing up. She was the grand-daughter of James Grade, befriended of the laird.

"Go to your seat, Agnes!" shouted the master, and turning from her, stood, with his handkerchief to one eye, looking down on the boy. So little did he know him, he suspected him of pretending to be more hurt than he was.

"Touch me gien ye daur," cried Agnes, as she stooped to remove his legs from the form.

"Leave him alone," shouted the master, and seizing her, pulled her away, and flung her from him that she almost fell.

But by this time the pain in his eye had subsided a little, and he began to doubt whether indeed the boy was pretending as he had imagined. He began also to feel not a little uneasy as to the possible consequences of his hasty act—not half so uneasy, however, as he would have felt, had the laird been as well-to-do as his neighbour, Lord Lickmyloof—who would be rather pleased than otherwise, the master thought, at any grief that might befall either Cosmo or the lass Gracie. Therefore, although he would have been ready to sink had the door then opened and the laird entered, he did not much fear any consequences to be counted serious from the unexpected failure of his self-command. He dragged the boy up by the arm, and set him on his seat, before Agnes could return; but his face was as that of one dead, and he fell forward on the desk. With a second great cry, Agnes again sprang forward. She was a strong girl, accustomed to all kinds of work, out-door and in-door. She caught Cosmo round the waist from behind, pulled him from the seat, and drew him to the door, which because of the heat stood open. The master had had enough of it, and did not attempt to hinder her. There she took him in her arms, and literally ran with him along the street.

## CHAPTER XVI. GRANNIE'S COTTAGE

But she had not to pass many houses before she came to that of her grandfather's mother, an aged woman, I need not say, but in very tolerable health and strength nevertheless. She sat at her spinning wheel, with her door wide open. Suddenly, and, to her dulled sense, noiselessly, Aggie came staggering in with her burden. She dropped him on the old woman's bed, and herself on the floor, her heart and lungs going wildly.

"I' the name o' a'!" cried her great-grandmother, stopping her wheel, breaking her thread, and letting the end twist madly up amongst the revolving iron teeth, emerging from the mist of their own speed, in which a moment before they had looked ethereal as the vibration-film of an insect's wings.

She rose with a haste marvellous for her years, and approaching, looked down on the prostrate form of the girl.

"It can never be my ain Aggie," she faltered, "to rush intil my quaiet hoose that gait, fling a man upo' my bed, an' fa' her len'th upo' my flure!"

But Agnes was not yet able to reply. She could only sign with her hand to the bed, which she did with such energy that her great-grandmother—GRANNIE, she called her, as did the whole of the village—turned at once thitherward. She could not see well, and the box-bed was dark, so she did not at first recognize Cosmo, but the moment she suspected who it was, she too uttered a cry—the cry of old age, feeble and wailful.

"The mighty be ower's! what's come to my bairn?" she said.

"The maister knockit him doon," gasped Agnes.

"Eh, lassie! rin for the doctor."

"No," came feebly from the bed. "I dinna want ony notice ta'en o' the business."

"Are ye sair hurtit, my bairn?" asked the old woman.

"My heid's some sair an' throughither-like; but I'll just lie still a wee, and syne I'll be able to gang hame. I'm some sick. I winna gang back to the school the day."

"Na, my bonnie man, that ye sanna!" cried Grannie, in a tone mingled of pity and indignation.

A moment more, and Agnes rose from the earth, for earth it was, quite fresh; and the two did all they could to make him comfortable. Aggie would have gone at once to let his father know; she was perfectly able, she said, and in truth seemed nothing the worse for her fierce exertion. But Cosmo said, "Bide a wee, Aggie, an' we'll gang hame thegither. I'll be better in twa or three minutes." But he did not get better so fast as he expected, and the only condition on which Grannie would consent not to send for the doctor, was, that Agnes should go and tell his father.

"But eh, Aggie!" said Cosmo, "dinna lat him think there's onything to be fleyt aboot. It's naething but a gey knap o' the heid; an' I'm sure the maister didna inten' duin me ony sarious hurt.—But my father's sure to gie him fair play!—he gies a' body fair play."

Agnes set out, and Cosmo fell asleep.

He slept a long time, and woke better. She hurried to Glenwarlock, and in the yard found the laird.

"Weel, lassie!" he said, "what brings ye here this time o' day? What for are ye no at the school? Ye'll hae little eneuch o' 't by an' by, whan the hairst 's come."

"It's the yoong laird!" said Aggie, and stopped.

"What's come till 'im?" asked the laird, in the sharpened tone of anxiety.

"It's no muckle, he says himsel'. But his heid's some sair yet."

"What maks his heid sair? He was weel eneuch whan he gaed this mornin'."

"The maister knockit 'im doon."

The laird started as if one had struck him in the face. The blood reddened his forehead, and his old eyes flashed like two stars. All the battle-fury of the old fighting race seemed to swell up from ancient fountains amongst the unnumbered roots of his being, and rush to his throbbing brain. He clenched his withered fist, drew himself up straight, and made his knees strong. For a moment he felt as in the prime of life and its pride. The next his fist relaxed, his hand fell by his side, and he bowed his head.

"The Lord hae mercy upo' me!" he murmured. "I was near takin' the affairs o' ane o' his into MY han's!"

He covered his face with his wrinkled hands, and the girl stood beside him in awe-filled silence. But she did not quite comprehend, and was troubled at seeing him stand thus motionless. In the trembling voice of one who would comfort her superior, she said,

"Dinna greit, laird. He'll be better, I'm thinkin', afore ye win till 'im. It was Grannie gart me come—no him."

Speechless the laird turned, and without even entering the house, walked away to go to the village. He had reached the valley-road before he discovered that Agnes was behind him.

"Dinna ye come, Aggie," he said; "ye may be wantit at hame."

"Ye dinna think I wad ley ye, laird!—'cep' ye was to think fit to sen' me frea ye. I'm maist as guid's a man to gang wi' ye—wi' the advantage o' bein' a wuman, as my mither tells me:"—She called her grandmother, MOTHER.—"ye see we can daur mair nor ony man—but, Guid forgie me!—no mair nor the yoong laird whan he flang his CAESAR straucht i' the maister's face this verra mornin'."

The laird stopped, turned sharply round, and looked at her.

"What did he that for?" he said.

"'Cause he ca'd yersel' a fule," answered the girl, with the utmost simplicity, and no less reverence.

The laird drew himself up once more, and looked twenty years younger. But it was not pride that inspired him, nor indignation, but the father's joy at finding in his son his champion.

"Mony ane's ca'd me that, I weel believe, lassie, though no to my ain face or that a' my bairn. But whether I deserve't or no, nane but ane kens. It's no by the word o' man I stan' or fa'; but it's hoo my maister luiks upo' my puir endeavour to gang by the thing he says. Min' this, lassie—lat fowk say as they like, but du ye as HE likes, an', or a' be dune, they'll be upo' their k-nees to ye. An' sae they'll be yet to my bairn—though I'm some tribbled he sud hae saired the maister—e'en as he deserved."

"What cud he du, sir? It was na for himsel' he strack! An' syne he never muved an inch, but stud there like a rock, an' liftit no a han' to defen' himsel', but jist loot the maister tak his wull o' 'im."

The pair tramped swiftly along the road, heeding nothing on either hand as they went, Aggie lithe and active, the laird stooping greatly in his forward anxiety to see his injured boy, but walking much faster "than his age afforded." Before they reached the village, the mid-day recess had come, and everybody knew what had happened. Loud were most in praise of the boy's behaviour, and many were the eyes that from window and door watched the laird, as he hurried down the street to "Grannie's," where all had learned the young laird was lying. But no one spoke, or showed that he was looking, and the laird walked straight on with his eyes to the ground, glancing neither to the right hand nor the left; and as did the laird, so did Aggie.

The door of the cottage stood open. There was a step down, but the laird knew it well. Turning to the left through a short passage, in the window of which stood a large hydrangea, over two wooden pails of water, he lifted the latch of the inner door, bowed his tall head, and entered the room where lay his darling. With a bow to Grannie, he went straight up to the bed, speedily discovered that Cosmo slept, and stood regarding him with a full heart. Who can tell but him who knows it, how much more it is to be understood by one's own, than by all the world beside! By one's own one learns to love all God's creatures, and from one's own one gets strength to meet the misprision of the world.

The room was dark though it was summer, and although it had two windows, one to the street, and one to the garden behind: both ceiling and floor were of a dark brown, for the beams and boards of the one were old and interpenetrated with smoke, and the other was of hard-beaten clay, into which also was wrought much smoke and an undefinable blackness, while the windows were occupied with different plants favoured of Grannie, so that little light could get in, and that little was half-swallowed by the general brownness. A tall eight-day clock stood in one corner, up to which, whoever would learn from it the time, had to advance confidentially, and consult its face on tip-toe, with peering eyes. Beside it was a beautifully polished chest of drawers; a nice tea-table stood in the centre, and some dark-shiny wooden chairs against the walls. A closet opened at the head of the bed, and at the foot of it was the door of the room and the passage, so that it stood in a recess, to which were wooden doors, seldom closed. A fire partly of peat, partly of tan, burned on the little hearth.

Cosmo opened his eyes, and saw those of his father looking down upon him. He stretched out his arms, and drew the aged head upon his bosom. His heart was too full to speak.

"How do you find yourself, my boy?" said the father, gently releasing himself. "I know all about it; you need not trouble yourself to tell me more than just how you are."

"Better, father, much better," answered Cosmo. "But there is one thing I must tell you. Just before it happened we were reading in the Bible-class about Samson—how the spirit of the Lord came upon him, and with the jaw-bone of an ass he slew ever so many of the Philistines; and when the master said that bad word about you, it seemed as if the spirit of the Lord came upon me; for I was not in a rage, but filled with what seemed a holy indignation; and as I had no ass's jaw-bone handy, I took my Caesar, and flung it as hard and as straight, as I could in the master's face. But I am not so sure about it now."

"Tak ye nae thought anent it, Cosmo, my bairn," said the old woman, taking up the word; "it's no a hair ayont what he deserved 'at daured put sic a word to the best man in a' the country. By the han' o' a babe, as he did Goliah o' Gath, heth the Lord rebuked the enemy.—The Lord himsel' 's upo' your side, laird, to gie ye siccan a brave son."

"I never kent him lift his han' afore," said the laird, as if he would fain mitigate judgment on youthful indiscretion,—"excep' it was to the Kirkmalloch bull, when he ran at him an' me as gien he wad hae pitcht 's ower the wa' o' the warl'."

"The mair like it WAS the speerit o' the Lord, as the bairn himsel' was jaloosin," remarked Grannie, in a tone of confidence to which the laird was ready enough to yield;—"an' whaur the speerit o' the Lord is, there's leeberty," she added, thinking less of the suitability of the quotation, than of the aptness of words in it. Glenwarlock stooped and kissed the face of his son, and went to fetch the doctor. Before he returned, Cosmo was asleep again. The doctor would not have him waked. From his pulse and the character of his sleep he judged he was doing well. He had heard all about the affair before, but heard all now as for the first time, assured the laird there was no danger, said he would call again, and recommended him to go home. The boy must remain where he was for the night, he said, and if the least ground for uneasiness should show itself, he would ride over, and make his report.

"I don't know what to think," returned the laird: "it would be trouble and inconvenience to Grannie."

"Deed, laird, ye sud be ashamt to say sic a thing: it'll be naething o' the kin'!" cried the old woman. "Here he s' bide—wi' yer leave, sir, an' no muv frae whaur he lies! There's anither bed i' the closet there. But, troth, what wi' the rheumatics, an'—an'—the din o' the rottans, we s' ca' 't, mony's the nicht I gang to nae bed ava'; an' to hae the yoong laird sleepin' i' my bed, an' me keepin' watch ower 'im, 'ill be jist like haein' an angel i' the hoose to luik efter. I'll be somebody again for ae nicht, I can tell ye! An' oh! it's a lang time, sir, sin' I was onybody i' this warl'! I houp sair they'll hae something for auldfowk to du i' the neist."

"Hoots, mistress Forsyth," returned the laird, "the' 'll be naebody auld there!"

"Hoo am I to win in than, sir? I'm auld, gien onybody ever was auld! An' hoo's yersel' to win in, sir—for ye maun be some auld yersel' by this time, thof I min' weel yer father a bit loonie in a tartan kilt."

"What wad ye say to be made yoong again, auld frien'?" suggested the laird, with a smile of wonderful sweetness.

"Eh, sir! there's naething to that effec' i' the word."

"Hoot!" rejoined the laird, "wad ye hae me plaguit to tell the laddie there a' thing I wad du for him, as gien he hadna a hert o' his ain to tell 'im a score o'things—ay, hun'ers o' things? Dinna ye ken 'at the speerit o' man's the can'le o' the Lord?"

"But sae mony for a' that follows but their ain fancies!—That ye maun alloo, laird; an' what comes o' yer can'le than?"

"That' sic as never luik whaur the licht fa's, but aye some ither gait, for they carena to walk by the same. But them 'at orders their wy's by what licht they hae, there's no fear o' them. Even sud they stummle, they sanna fa'."

"Deed, laird, I'm thinkin' ye may be richt. I hae stummlet mony's the time, but I'm no doon yet; an' I hae a guid houp 'at maybe, puir dissiple as I am, the Maister may lat on 'at he kens me, whan that great and terrible day o' the Lord comes."

Cosmo began to stir. His father went to the bed-side, and saw at a glance that the boy was better. He told him what the doctor had decreed. Cosmo said he was quite able to get up and go home that minute. But his father would not hear of it.

"I can't bear to think of you walking back all that way alone, papa," objected Cosmo.

"Ye dinna think, Cosmo," interposed Aggie, "'at I'm gauin to lat the laird gang hame himlane, an' me here to be his body-gaird! I ken my duty better nor that."

But the laird did not go till they had all had tea together, and the doctor had again come and gone, and given his decided opinion that all Cosmo needed was a little rest, and that he would be quite well in a day or two. Then at length his father left him, and, comforted, set out with Aggie for Glenwarlock.



## CHAPTER VII. DREAMS

The gloamin' came down much sooner in Grannie's cottage than on the sides of the eastward hills, but the old woman made up her little fire, and it glowed a bright heart to the shadowy place. Though the room was always dusky, it was never at this season quite dark any time of the night. It was not absolutely needful, except for the little cooking required by the invalid—for as such, in her pride of being his nurse, Grannie regarded him—but she welcomed the excuse for a little extra warmth to her old limbs during the night watches. Then she sat down in her great chair, and all was still.

"What for arena ye spinnin', Grannie?" said Cosmo. "I like fine to hear the wheel singin' like a muckle flee upo' the winnock. It spins i' my heid lang lingles o' thoughts, an' dreams, an' wad-be's. Neist to hearin' yersel' tell a tale, I like to hear yer wheel gauin'. It has a w'y o' 'ts ain wi' me!"

"I was feart it micht vex ye wi' the soomin' o' 't," answered Grannie, and as she spoke she rose, and lighted her little lamp, though she scarcely needed light for her spinning, and sat down to her wheel.

For a long unweary time Cosmo lay and listened, an aerial Amphion, building castles in the air to its music, which was so monotonous that, like the drone of the bag-pipes, he could use it for accompaniment to any dream-time of his own.

When a man comes to trust in God thoroughly, he shrinks from castle-building, lest his faintest fancy should run counter to that loveliest Will; but a boy's dreams are nevertheless a part of his education. And the true heart will not leave the blessed conscience out, even in its dreams.

Those of Cosmo were mostly of a lovely woman, much older than himself, who was kind to him, and whom he obeyed and was ready to serve like a slave. These came, of course, first of all, from the heart that needed and delighted in the thought of a mother, but they were bodied out from the memory, faint, far-off, and dim, of his own mother, and the imaginations of her roused by his father's many talks with him concerning her. He dreamed now of one, now of another beneficent power, of the fire, the air, the earth, or the water—each of them a gracious woman, who favoured, helped, and protected him, through dangers and trials innumerable. Such imaginings may be—nay must be unhealthy for those who will not attempt the right in the face of loss and pain and shame; but to those who labour in the direction of their own ideal, dreams will do no hurt, but foster rather the ideal.

When at length the spinning-wheel ceased with its hum, the silence was to Cosmo like the silence after a song, and his thoughts refused to do their humming alone. The same moment he fell—from a wondrous region where he dwelt with sylphs in a great palace, built on the tree-tops of a forest ages old; where the buxom air bathed every limb, and was to his ethereal body as water—sensible as a liquid; whose every room rocked like the baby's cradle of the nursery rime, but equilibrium was the merest motion of the will; where the birds nested in its cellars, and the squirrels ran up and down its stairs, and the woodpeckers pulled themselves along its columns and rails by their beaks; where the winds swung the whole city with a rhythmic roll, and the sway as of tempest waves, music-ruled to ordered cadences; where, far below, lower than the cellars, the deer, and the mice, and the dormice, and the foxes, and all the wild things of the forest, ran in its caves—from this high city of the sylphs, watched and loved and taught by the most gracious and graceful and tenderly ethereal and powerful of beings, he fell supine into Grannie's box-bed, with the departed hum of her wheel spinning out its last thread of sound in his disappointed brain.

In after years when he remembered the enchanting dreams of his boyhood, instead of sighing after them as something gone for ever, he would say to himself, "what matter they are gone? In the heavenly kingdom my own mother is waiting me, fairer and stronger and real. I imagined the elves; God imagined my mother."

The unconscious magician of the whole mystery, who had seemed to the boy to be spinning his very brain into dreams, rose, and, drawing near the bed, as if to finish the ruthless destruction, and with her long witch-broom sweep down the very cobwebs of his airy phantasy, said,

"Is ye waukin', Cosmo my bairn?"

"Ay am I," answered Cosmo, with a faint pang, and a strange sense of loss: when should he dream its like again!

"Soon, soon, Cosmo," he might have heard, could he have interpreted the telephonic signals from the depths of his own being; "wherever the creative pneuma can enter, there it enters, and no door stands so wide to it as that of the obedient heart."

"Weel, ye maun hae yer supper, an' syne ye maun say yer prayers, an' hae dune wi' Tyseday, an' gang on til' Wudens-day."

"I'm nae wantin' ony supper, thank ye," said the boy.

"Ye maun hae something, my bonny man; for them 'at aits ower little, as weel's them 'at aits ower muckle, the night-mear rides—an' she's a fearsome horse. Ye can never win upo' the back o' her, for as guid a rider as ye're weel kent to be, my bairn. Sae wull ye hae a drappy parritch an' ream? or wad ye prefer a sup of fine gruel, sic as yer mother used to like weel frae my han', whan it sae happent I was i' the hoose?" The offer seemed to the boy to bring him a little nearer the mother whose memory he worshipped, and on the point of saying, for the sake of saving her trouble, that he would have the porridge, he chose the gruel.

He watched from his nest the whole process of its making. It took a time of its own, for one of the secrets of good gruel is a long acquaintance with the fire.—Many a time the picture of that room returned to him in far different circumstances, like a dream of quiet and self-sustained delight—though his one companion was an aged woman.

When he had taken it, he fell asleep once more, and when he woke again, it was in the middle of the night. The lamp was nearly burned out: it had a long, red, disreputable nose, that spoke of midnight hours and exhausted oil. The old lady was dozing in her chair. The clock had just struck something, for the sound of its bell was yet faintly pulsing in the air. He sat up, and looked out into the room. Something seemed upon him—he could not tell what. He felt as if something had been going on besides the striking of the clock, and were not yet over—as if something was even now being done in the room. But there the old woman slept, motionless, and apparently in perfect calm! It could not, however, have been perfect as it seemed, for presently she began to talk. At first came only broken sentences, occasionally with a long pause; and just as he had concluded she would say nothing more, she would begin again. There was something awful to the fancy of the youth in the issuing of words from the lips of one apparently unconscious of surrounding things; her voice was like the voice of one speaking from another world. Cosmo was a brave boy where duty was concerned, but conscience and imagination were each able to make him tremble. To tremble, and to turn the back, are, however, very different things: of the latter, the thing deserving to be called cowardice, Cosmo knew nothing; his hair began to rise upon his head, but that head he never hid beneath the bed-clothes. He sat and stared into the gloom, where the old woman lay in her huge chair, muttering at irregular intervals.

Presently she began to talk a little more continuously. And now also Cosmo's heart had got a little quieter, and no longer making such a noise in his ears, allowed him to hear better. After a few words seemingly unconnected, though probably with a perfect dependence of their own, she began to murmur something that sounded like verses. Cosmo soon perceived that she was saying the same thing over and over, and at length he had not only made out every word of the few lines, but was able to remember them. This was what he afterwards recalled—by that time uncertain whether the whole thing had not been a dream:

Catch yer naig an' pu' his tail: In his hin' heel ca' a nail; Rug his lugs frae ane anither—Stan' up, an' ca' the king yer brither.

When first he repeated them entire to himself, the old woman still muttering them, he could not help laughing, and the noise, though repressed, yet roused her. She woke, not, like most young people, with slow gradation of consciousness, but all at once was wide awake. She sat up in her chair.

"Was I snorin', laddie, 'at ye leuch?" she asked, in a tone of slight offence.

"Eh, na!" replied Cosmo. "It was only 'at ye was sayin' something rale funny—i' yer sleep, ye ken—a queer jingle o' poetry it was."

Therewith he repeated the rime, and Grannie burst into a merry laugh—which however sobered rather suddenly.

"I dinna won'er I was sayin' ower thae fule words," she said, "for 'deed I was dreamin' o' the only ane I ever h'ard say them, an' that was whan I was a lass—maybe aboot thirty. Onybody nicht hae h'ard him sayin' them—ower and ower til himsel', as gien he cudna weary o' them, but naebody but mysel' seemed to hae ta'en ony notice o' the same. I used whiles to won'er whether he fully un'erstude what he was sayin'—but troth! hoo cud there be ony sense in sic havers?"

"Was there ony mair o' the ballant?" asked Cosmo.

"Gien there was mair; I h'ard na't," replied Grannie. "An' weel I wat! he was na ane to sing, the auld captain.—Did ye never hear tell o' 'im, laddie?"

"Gien ye mean the auld brither o' the laird o' that time, him 'at cam hame frae his sea-farin' to the East Indies—"

"Ay, ay; that's him! Ye hae h'ard tell o' 'im! He hed a ship o' 's ain, an' made mony a voyage afore ony o' 's was born, an' was an auld man whan at len'th hame cam he, as the sang says—ower auld to haud by the sea ony more. I'll never forget the luik o' the man whan first I saw him, nor the hurry an' the scurry, the rinnin' here, an' the routin' there, 'at there was whan the face o' 'm came in at the gett! Ye see they a' thought he was hame wi' a walth ayont figures—stowed awa' somewhaur—naebody kent whaur. Eh, but he was no a bonny man, an' fowk said he dee'd na a fairstrae deith: hoo that may be, I dinna weel ken: there WAR unco things aboot the affair—things 'at winna weel bide speykin' o'. Ae thing's certain, an' that is, 'at the place has never thriven sin syne. But, for that maitter, it hedna thriven for mony a lang afore. An' there was a fowth o' awfu' stories reengin' the country, like ghaists 'at naebody cud get a grip o'—as to hoo he had gotten the said siller, an' sic like—the siller 'at naebody ever saw; for upo' that siller, as I tell ye, naebody ever cuist an e'e. Some said he had been a pirate upo' the hie seas, an' had ta'en the siller in lumps o' gowd frae puir ships 'at hadna men eneuch to haud the grip o' 't; some said he had been a privateer; an' ither some said there was sma' differ atween the twa. An' some wad hae't he was ane o' them 'at tuik an' sauld the puir black fowk, 'at cudna help bein' black, for as ootlandish as it maun luik—I never saw nane o' the nation mysel'—ony mair nor a corbie can help his feathers no bein' like a doo's; an' gien they turnt black for ony deevilry o' them 'at was their forbeirs, I kenna an' it maks naething to me or mine, —I wad fain an' far raither du them a guid turn nor tak an' sell them; for gien their parents had sinned, the mair war they to be pitied. But as I was sayin', naebody kent hoo he had gethert his siller, the mair by token 'at maybe there was nane, for naebody, as I was tellin' ye, ever had the sma'est glimp o' siller aboot 'im. For a close-loofed near kin o' man he was, gien ever ony! Aye ready was he to borrow a shillin' frae ony fule 'at wad len' him ane, an' lang had him 'at len't it forgotten to luik for 't, er' he thought o' peyin' the same. It was mair nor ae year or twa 'at he leaved aboot the place, an' naebody cared muckle for his company, though a' body was ower feart to lat him ken he was na welcome here or there; for wha cud tell he nicht oot wi' the swoord he aye carriet, an' mak an' en' o' 'im! For 'deed he fearna God nor man, ony mair nor the jeedge i' the Scriptur'. He drank a heap—as for a' body at he ca'd upo' aye hed oot the whisky-bottle well willun' to please the man they war feart at."

The voice of the old woman went sounding in the ears of the boy, on and on in the gloom, and through it, possibly from the still confused condition of his head, he kept constantly hearing the rimes she had repeated to him. They seemed to have laid hold of him as of her, perhaps from their very foolishness, in an odd inexplicable way:—

Catch yer naig an' pu' his tail; In his hin' heel ca' a nail; Rug his lugs frae ane anither—Stan' up, an' ca' the king yer brither.

On and on went the rime, and on and on went the old woman's voice.

"Weel, there cam' a time whan an English lord begud to be seen aboot the place, an' that was nae comon sicht i' oor puir country. He was a frien' fowk said, o' the yoong Markis o' Lossie, an' that was hoo 'he cam to sicht. He gaed fleein' aboot, luikin' at this, an' luikin' at that; an' whaur or hoo he fell in wi' HIM, I dinna ken, but or lang the twa o' them was a heap thegither. They playt cairts thegither, they drank thegither, they drave oot thegither—for the auld captain never crossed beast's back—an' what made sic frien's o' them nobody could imaigine. For the tane was a rouch sailor chield, an' the tither was a yoong lad, little mair, an' a fine gentleman as weel's a bonny man. But the upshot o' 't a' was an ill ane; for, efter maybe aboot a month or sae o' sic friendship as was atween them, there cam a nicht 'at brouchna the captain hame; for ye maun un'erstan', wi' a' his rouch w'ys, an' his drinkin', an' his cairt-playin', he was aye hame at nicht, an' safe intil's bed, whaur he sleepit i' the best chaumer i' the castle. Ay, he wad come hame, aften as drunk as man cud be, but hame he cam. Sleep intil the efternune o' the neist day he wad, but never oot o' 's nain bed—or if no aye in his ain nakit BED, for I fan' him ance mysel' lyin' snorin' upo' the flure, it was aye intil 's ain room, as I say, an' no in ony strange place drunk or sober. Sae there was some surprise at his no appearin', an' fowk spak o' 't, but no that muckle, for naebody cared i' their hert what cam o' the man. Still whan the men gaed oot to their wark, they bude to gie a luik gien there was ony sign o' 'm. It was easy to think 'at he micht hae been at last ower sair owertaen to be able to win hame. But that wasna it, though whan they cam upo' 'm lyin' on's back i' the howe yon'er 'at luiks up to my daughter's bit gerse for her coo', they thought he bude to hae sleepit there a' nicht. Sae he had, but it was the sleep 'at kens no waukin—at least no the kin' o' waukin 'at comes wi' the mornin'!"

Cosmo recognized with a shudder his favourite spot, where on his birthday, as on many a day before, he had fallen asleep. But the old woman went on with her story.

"Deid was the auld captain—as deid as ever was man 'at had nane left to greit for him. But thof there was nae greitin', no but sic a hullabaloo as rase upo' the discovery! They rade an' they ran; the doctor cam', an' the minister, an' the lawyer, an' the grave-digger. But whan a man's deid, what can a' the warl' du for 'im but berry 'im? puir hin'er en' thof it be to him' at draws himsel' up, an' blows himsel' oot! There was mony a conjectur as to hoo he cam by his deith, an' mony a doobt it wasna by fair play. Some said he dee'd by his ain han', driven on til't by the enemy; an' it was true the blade he cairriet was lyin' upo' the grass aside 'im; but ither some 'at exem't him, said the hole i' the side o' 'im was na made wi' that. But o' a' 'at cam to speir efter 'im, the English lord was nane. He hed vainished the country. The general opinyon sattled doon to this, 'at they twa bude till hae fa'en oot at cairts, an' fouchten it oot, an' the auld captain, for a' his skeel an' exparience, had had the warst o' 't, an' so there they faun' 'im.—But I reckon, Cosmo, yer father 'ill hae tellt ye a' aboot the thing, mony's the time, or noo, an' I'm jist deivin' ye wi' my clavers, an' haudin' 'ye ohn sleepit!"

"Na, Grannie," answered Cosmo, "he never tellt me what ye hae tellt me noo. He did tell me 'at there was sic a man, an' the ill en' he cam til; an' I think he was jist gaein' on to tell me mair, whan Grizzie cam to say the denner was ready. That was only yesterday—or the day afore, I'm thinkin', by this time.—But what think ye could hae been in's heid wi' yon jingle aboot the horsie?"

"Ow! what wad be intil't but jist fulish nonsense? Ye ken some fowk has a queer trick o' sayin' the same thing ower an' ower again to themsel's, wi'oot ony sense intil't. There was the auld laird himsel'; he was ane o' sic. Aye an' ower again he wad be sayin' til himsel', 'A hun'er poun'! Ay, a hun'er poun'!' It maittered na what he wad be speikin' aboot, or wha til, in it wad come!—i' the middle o' onything, ye cudna tell whan or whaur,—'A hun'er poun'!' says he; 'Ay, a hun'er poun'!' Fowk leuch at the first, but sune gat used til't, an' cam hardly to ken 'at he said it, for what has nae sense has little hearin'. An' I doobtna thae rimes wasna even a verse o' an auld ballant, but jist a cletter o' clinkin' styte (*nonsense*), 'at he had learnt frae some blackamore bairn, maybe, an' cudna get oot o' 's heid ony

ither gait, but bude to say't to hae dune wi' 't—jist like a cat whan it gangs scrattin' at the door, ye hae to get up, whether ye wull or no, an' lat the cratur oot."

Cosmo did not feel quite satisfied with the explanation, but he made no objection to it.

"I maun alloo, hooever," the old woman went on, "'at ance ye get a haud o' THEM, they tak a grip o' YOU, an' hae a queer w'y o' hauntin' ye like, as they did the man himsel', sae 'at ye canna yet rid o' them. It comes only at noos an' thans, but whan the fit's upo' me, I canna get them oot o' my heid. The verse gangs on tum'lin' ower an' ower intil 't, till I'm jist scunnert wi' 't. Awa' it wanna gang, maybe for a haill day, an' syne it mayna come again for months."

True enough, the rime was already running about in Cosmo's head like a mouse, and he fell asleep with it ringing in the ears of his mind.

Before he woke again, which was in the broad daylight, he had a curious dream.

He dreamed that he was out in the moonlight. It was a summer night—late. But there was something very strange about the night: right up in the top of it was the moon, looking down as if she knew all about it, and something was going to happen. He did not like the look of her—he had never seen her look like that before! and he went home just to get away from her. As he was going up the stairs to his chamber, something moved him—he could not tell what—to stop at the door of the drawing-room, and go in. It was flooded with moonlight, but he did not mind that, so long as he could keep out of her sight. Still it had a strange, eerie look, with its various pieces of furniture casting different shadows from those that by rights belonged to them. He gazed at this thing and that, as if he had never seen it before. The place seemed to cast a spell over him, so that he could not leave it. He seated himself on the ancient brocaded couch, and sat staring, with a sense, which by degrees grew dreadful, that he was where he would not be, and that if he did not get up and go, something would happen. But he could not rise—not that he felt any physical impediment, but that he could not make a resolve strong enough—like one in irksome company, who wants to leave, but waits in vain a fit opportunity. Delay grew to agony, but still he sat.

He became aware that he was not alone. His whole skin seemed to contract with a shuddering sense of presence. Gradually, as he gazed straight in front of him, slowly, in the chair on the opposite side of the fire-place, grew visible the form of a man, until he saw it quite plainly—that of a seafaring man, in a blue coat, with a red sash round his waist, in which were pistols, and a dagger. He too sat motionless, fixing on him the stare of fierce eyes, black, yet glowing, as if set on fire of hell. They filled him with fear, but something seemed to sustain him under it. He almost fancied, when first on waking he thought over it, that a third must have been in the room—for his protection. The face that stared at him was a brown and red and weather—beaten face, cut across with a great scar, and wearing an expression of horror trying not to look horrible. His fear threatened to turn him into clay, but he met it with scorn, strove against it, would not and did not yield. Still the figure stared, as if it would fascinate him into limpest submission. Slowly at length it rose, and with a look that seemed meant to rivet the foregone stare—a look of mingled pain and fierceness, turned, and led the way from the room, whereupon the spell was so far broken or changed, that he was able to rise and follow him: even in his dreams he was a boy of courage, and feared nothing so much as yielding to fear. The figure went on, nor ever turned its head, up the stair to the room over that they had left—the best bedroom, the guest-chamber of the house—not often visited, and there it entered. Still following, Cosmo entered also. The figure walked across the room, as if making for the bed, but in the middle of the floor suddenly turned, and went round by the foot of the bed to the other side of it, where the curtains hid it. Cosmo followed, but when he reached the other side, the shade was nowhere to be seen, and he woke, his heart beating terribly.

By this time Grannie was snoring in her chair, or very likely, in his desire to emerge from its atmosphere, he would have told her his dream. For a while he lay looking at the dying fire, and the streak from the setting moon, that stole in at the window, and lay weary at the foot of the wall. Slowly he fell fast asleep, and slept far into the morning: long after lessons were begun in the school, and

village-affairs were in the full swing of their daily routine, he slept; nor had he finished his breakfast, when his father entered.

"I'm quite well, papa," answered the boy to his gentle yet eager inquiry;—"perfectly able to go to school in the afternoon."

"I don't mean you to go again, Cosmo," replied his father gravely.

"It could not be pleasant either for yourself or for the master.

The proper relation between you is destroyed."

"If you think I was wrong, papa, I will make an apology."

"If you had done it for yourself, I should unhesitatingly say you must. But as it was, I am not prepared to say so."

"What am I to do then? How am I to get ready for college?"

The laird gave a sigh, and made no answer. Alas! there were more difficulties than that in the path to college.

He turned away, and went to call on the minister, while Cosmo got up and dressed: except a little singing in his head when he stooped, he was aware of no consequences of the double blow.

Grannie was again at her wheel, and Cosmo sat down in her chair to await his father's return.

"Whaur said ye the captain sleepit whan he was at the castle?" he inquired across the buzz and whiz and hum of the wheel. Through the low window, betwixt the leaves of the many plants that shaded it, he could see the sun shining hot upon the bare street; but inside was soft gloom filled with murmurous sound.

"Whaur but i' the best bedroom?" answered Grannie. "Naething less wad hae pleased HIM, I can assure ye. For ance 'at there cam the markis to the hoose—whan things warna freely sae scant about the place as they hae been sin' yer father cam to the throne—there cam at his back a fearsome storm, sic as comes but seldom in a life lang as mine, an' sic 'at his lordship cudna win awa'. Thereupon yer father, that is, yer gran'father,—or it wad be yer grit-gran'father—I'm turnin' some confused amo' ye: ye aye keep comin'!—onyhoo, he gae the captain a kent like, 'at he wad du weel to offer his room til's lordship. But wad he, think ye? Na, no him! He grew reid, an' syne as white's the aisse, an' luikit to be i' the awfu'est inside rage 'at mortal wessel cud weel hand. Sae yer gran'father, no 'at he was feart at 'im, for Is' be bun' he never was feart afore the face o' man, but jest no wullin' to anger his ain kin, an' maybe no willin' onybody sud say he was a respecer o' persons, heeld his tongue an' said nae mair, an' the markis hed the second best bed, for he sleepit in Glenwarlock's ain."

Cosmo then told her the dream he had had in the night, describing the person he had seen in it as closely as he could. Now all the time Grannie had been speaking, it was to the accompaniment of her wheel, but Cosmo had not got far with his narrative when she ceased spinning, and sat absorbed—listening as to a real occurrence, not the feverish dream of a boy. When he ended,

"It maun hae been the auld captain himself!" she said under her breath, and with a sigh; then shut up her mouth, and remained silent, leaving Cosmo in doubt whether it was that she would take no interest in such a foolish thing, or found in it something to set her thinking; but he could not help noting that there seemed a strangeness about her silence; nor did she break it until his father returned.

## CHAPTER VIII. HOME

Cosmo was not particularly fond of school, and he was particularly fond of holidays; hence his father's resolve that he should go to school no more, seemed to him the promise of an endless joy. The very sun seemed swelling in his heart as he walked home with his father. A whole day of home and its pleasures was before him—only the more welcome that he had had a holiday so lately, and that so many more lay behind it. Every shadow about the old place was a delight to him. Never human being loved more the things into which he had been born than did Cosmo. The whole surrounding had to him a sacred look, such as Jerusalem, the temple, and its vessels, bore to the Jews, even those of them who were capable of loving little else. There was hardly anything that could be called beauty about the building—strength and gloom were its main characteristics—but its very stones were dear to the boy. There never were such bees, there never were such thick walls, there never were such storms, never such a rushing river, as those about his beloved home! And this although, all the time, as I have said, he longed for more beauty of mountain and wood than the country around could afford him. Then there were the books belonging to the house!—was there any such a collection in the world besides! They were in truth very few—all contained in a closet opening out of his father's bedroom; but Cosmo had a feeling of inexhaustible wealth in them—partly because his father had not yet allowed him to read everything there, but restricted him to certain of the shelves—as much to cultivate self-restraint in him as to keep one or two of the books from him,—partly because he read books so that they remained books to him, and he believed in them after he had read them, nor imagined himself capable of exhausting them. But the range of his taste was certainly not a limited one. While he revelled in *The Arabian Nights*, he read also, and with no small enjoyment, the *Night Thoughts*—books, it will be confessed, considerably apart both in scope and in style. But while thus, for purest pleasure, fond of reading, to enjoy life it was to him enough to lie in the grass; in certain moods, the smell of the commonest flower would drive him half crazy with delight. On a holiday his head would be haunted with old ballads like a sunflower with bees: on other days they would only come and go. He rejoiced even in nursery rimes, only in his head somehow or other they got glorified. The swing and hum and BIZZ of a line, one that might have to him no discoverable meaning, would play its tune in him as well as any mountain-stream its infinite water-jumble melody. One of those that this day kept—not coming and going, but coming and coming, just as Grannie said his foolish rime haunted the old captain, was that which two days before came into his head when first he caught sight of the moon playing bo-peep with him betwixt the cows legs:

Whan the coo louns ower the mune, The reid gowd rains intil men's shune.

I think there must at one time have been a poet in the Glenwarlock nursery, for there were rimes, and modifications of rimes, floating about the family, for which nobody could account. Cosmo's mother too had been, in a fragmentary way, fond of verse; and although he could not remember many of her favourite rimes, his father did, and delighted in saying them over and over to her child—and that long before he was capable of understanding them. Here is one:

Make not of thy heart a casket, Opening seldom, quick to close; But of bread a wide-mouthed basket, And a cup that overflows.

Here is another:

The gadfly makes the horse run swift: "Speed," quoth the gadfly, "is my gift."

One more, and it shall be the last for the present: They serve as dim lights on the all but vanished mother, of whom the boy himself knew so little.

In God alone, the perfect end, Wilt thou find thyself or friend. Cosmo's dream of life was, to live all his days in the house of his forefathers—or at least and worst, to return to it at last, how long

soever he might have been compelled to be away from it. In his castle-building, next to that of the fairy-mother-lady, his fondest fancy was—not the making of a fortune, but the returning home with one, to make the house of his fathers beautiful, and the heart of his father glad. About the land he did not think so much yet: the country was open to him as if it had been all his own. Still, he had quite a different feeling for that portion which yet lay within the sorely contracted marches; to have seen any smallest nook of that sold, would have been like to break his heart. In him the love of place was in danger of becoming a disease. There was in it something, I fear, of the nature, if not of the avarice that grasps, yet of the avarice that clings. He was generous as few in the matter of money, but then he had had so little—not half enough to learn to love it! Nor had he the slightest idea of any mode in which to make it. Most of the methods he had come in contact with, except that of manual labour, in which work was done and money paid immediately for it, repelled him, as having elements of the unhandsome where not the dishonest: he was not yet able to distinguish between substance and mode in such matters. The only way in which he ever dreamed of coming into possession of money—it was another of his favourite castles—was finding in the old house a room he had never seen or heard of before, and therein a hoard of riches incredible. Such things had been—why might it not be?

As they walked, his father told him he had been thinking all night what it would be best to do with him, now that the school was closed against him; and that he had come to the conclusion to ask his friend Peter Simon—the wits of the neighbourhood called him Simon Peter—to take charge of his education.

"He is a man of peculiar opinions," he said, "as I daresay you may have heard; but everything in him is, practice and theory, on a scale so grand, that to fear harm from him would be to sin against the truth. A man must learn to judge for himself, and he will teach you that. I have seen in him so much that I recognize as good and great, that I am compelled to believe in him where the things he believes appear to me out of the way, or even extravagant."

"I have heard that he believes in ghosts, papa!" said Cosmo.

His father smiled, and made him no answer. He had been born into an age whose incredulity, taking active form, was now fast approaching its extreme, and becoming superstition; and the denial of many things that had long been believed in the country had penetrated at last even to the remote region where his property lay: like that property, his mind, because of the age, lay also in a sort of border-land. An active believer in the care and providence of God, with no conscious difficulty in accepting any miracle recorded in the Bible, he was, where the oracles were dumb, in a measure inclined to a scepticism, which yet was limited to the region of his intellect;—his imagination turned from its conclusions, and cherished not a little so-called weakness for the so-called supernatural—so far as any glimmer of sense or meaning or reason would show itself therein. And in the history of the world, the imagination has, I fancy, been quite as often right as the intellect, and the things in which it has been right, have been of much the greater importance. Only, unhappily, wherever Pegasus has shown the way through a bog the pack-horse which follows gets the praise of crossing it; while the blunders with which the pack-horse is burdened, are, the moment each is discovered, by the plodding leaders of the pair transferred to the space betwixt the wings of Pegasus, without regard to the beauty of his feathers. The laird was therefore unable to speak with authority respecting such things, and was not particularly anxious to influence the mind of his son concerning them. Happily, in those days the platitudes and weary vulgarities of what they call SPIRITUALISM, had not been heard of in those quarters, and the soft light of imagination yet lingered about the borders of that wide region of mingled false and true, commonly called Superstition. It seems to me the most killing poison to the imagination must be a strong course of "spiritualism." For myself, I am not so set upon entering the unknown, as, instead of encouraging what holy visitations faith, not in the spiritual or the immortal, but in the living God, may bring, to creep through the sewers of it to get in. I care not to encounter its mud-larkes, and lovers of garbage, its thieves, impostors, liars, and canaille, in general. That they are on the other side, that they are what men call dead, does not seem to me sufficient reason for taking



them into my confidence, courting their company, asking their advice. A well-attested old-fashion ghost story, where such is to be had, is worth a thousand seances.

"Do YOU believe in ghosts, papa?" resumed Cosmo, noting his father's silence, and remembering that he had never heard him utter an opinion on the subject.

"The master says none but fools believe in them now; and he makes such a face at anything he calls superstition, that you would think it must be somewhere in the commandments."

"Mr. Simon remarked the other day in my hearing," answered his father, "that the dread of superstition might amount to superstition, and become the most dangerous superstition of all."

"Do you think so, papa?"

"I could well believe it. Besides, I have always found Mr. Simon so reasonable, even where I could not follow him, that I am prejudiced in favor of anything he thinks."

The boy rejoiced to hear his father talk thus, for he, had a strong leaning to the marvellous, and hitherto, from the schoolmaster's assertion and his father's silence, had supposed nothing was to be accepted for belief but what was scientifically probable, or was told in the bible. That we live in a universe of marvels of which we know only the outsides,—and which we turn into the incredible by taking the mere outsides for all, even while we know the roots of the seen remain unseen—these spiritual facts now began to dawn upon him, and fell in most naturally with those his mind had already conceived and entertained. He was therefore delighted at the thought of making the closer acquaintance of a man like Mr. Simon—a man of whose peculiarities even, his father could speak in such terms. All day long he brooded on the prospect, and in the twilight went out wandering over the hills.

There was no night there at this season, any more than all the year through in heaven. Indeed we have seldom real positive night in this world—so many provisions have been made against it. Every time we say, "What a lovely night!" we speak of a breach, a rift in the old night. There is light more or less, positive light, else were there no beauty. Many a night is but a low starry day, a day with a softened background against which the far-off suns of millions of other days show themselves: when the near vision vanishes the farther hope awakes. It is nowhere said of heaven, there shall be no twilight there,

## CHAPTER IX. THE STUDENT

The twilight had not yet reached the depth of its mysteriousness, when Cosmo, returning home from casting a large loop of wandering over several hills, walked up to James Gracie's cottage, thinking whether they would not all be in bed.

But as he passed the window, he saw a little light, and went on to the door and knocked: had it been the daytime, he would have gone straight in. Agnes came, and opened cautiously, for there were occasionally such beings as tramps about.

"Eh! it's you?" she cried with a glad voice, when she saw the shape of Cosmo in the dimness. "There's naething wrang I houp," she added, changing her tone.

"Na, naething," answered Cosmo. "I only wantit to lat ye ken 'at I wasna gaein' back to the schuil ony mair."

"Weel, I dinna won'er at that!" returned Agnes with a little sigh. "Efter the w'y the maister behaved til ye, the laird cud ill lat ye gang there again. But what's he gaein' to du wi' ye, Maister Cosmo, gien a body micht speir 'at has nae richt to be keerious?"

"He's sen'in' me to maister Simon," answered Cosmo.

"I wuss I was gaein' tu," sighed Aggie. "I'm jist feart 'at I come to hate the maister efter ye're no to be seen there, Cosmo. An' we maunna hate, for that, ye ken,'s the hin 'er en' o' a' thing. But it wad be a heap easier no to hate him, gien I had naething tu du wi' him."

"That maun be confest," answered Cosmo.—"But," he added, "the hairst-play 'ill be here sune, an' syne the hairst itsel'; an' whan ye gang back ye'll hae won ower't."

"Na, I doobt no," Cosmo; for, ye sae, as I hae h'ard my father say, the Gracies are a' terrible for min'in'. Na, there's no forgettin' o' naething. What for sud onything be forgotten? It's a cooardly kin' o' a' w'y, to forget."

"Some things, I doobt, hae to be forgotten," returned Cosmo, thoughtfully. "Gien ye forgie a body for enstance, ye maun forget tu—no sae muckle, I'm thinkin', for the sake o' them 'at did ye the wrang, for wha wad tak up again a fool (foul) thing ance it was drappit?—but for yer ain sake; for what ye hae dune richt, my father says, maun be forgotten oot 'o sight for fear o' corruption, for naething comes to stink waur nor a guid deed hung up i' the munelicht o' the memory.

"Eh!" exclaimed Aggie, "but ye're unco wice for a lad o' yer 'ears."

"I wad be an nuco gowk," remarked Cosmo, "gien I kent naething, wi' sic a father as yon o' mine. What wad ye think o' yersel' gien the dochter o' Jeames Gracie war nae mair wice-like nor Meg Scroggie?"

Agnes laughed, but made no reply, for the voice of her mother came out of the dark:

"Wha's that, Aggie, ye're haudin' sic a confab wi' in the middle o' the night? Ye tellt me ye had to sit up to yer lessons!"

"I was busy at them, mither, whan Maister Cosmo chappit at the door."

"Weel, what for lat ye him stan' there? Ye may hae yer crack wi' HIM as lang's ye like—in rizzon, that is. Gar him come in."

"Na, na, mistress Gracie," answered Cosmo; "I maun awa' hame; I hae had a gey long walk. It's no 'at I'm tired, but I'm gey and sleepy. Only I was sae pleased 'at I was gaein' to learn my lessons wi' Maister Simon,'at I bude to tell Aggie. She micht ha' been won'erin', an' thinkin' I wasna better, gien she hadna seen me at the schuil the morn."

"Is' warran' her ohn gane to the schuil ohn speirt in at the Castle the first thing i' the mornin', an' seein' gien the laird had ony eeran' to the toon. Little cares she for the maister, gien onybody at the Hoose be in want o' her!"

"Is there naething I cud help ye wi', Aggie, afore I gang?" asked Cosmo. "Somebody tellt me ye was tryin' yer han' at algebra."

"Naebody had ony business to tell ye ony sic a thing," returned Aggie, rather angrily. "It's no at the schuil I wad think o' sic a ploy. They wad a' lauch fine! But I WAD fain ken what's intil the thing. I canNOT un'erstan' hoo fowk can coont wi' letters an' crosses an' strokes in place o' figgers. I hae been at it a haillook noo—by mysel', ye ken—an' I'm nane nearer til 't yet. I can add an' subtrac', accordin' to the rules gien, but that's no un'erstan'in', an' un'erstan' I canna."

"I'm thinkin' it's something as gien x was a horse, an' y was a coo, an' z was a cairt, or onything ither ye micht hae to ca' 't; an' ye bargain awa' about the x an' the y and the z, an' ley the horse i' the stable, the coo i' the byre, an' the cairt i' the shed, till ye hae sattlet a'."

"But ye ken aboot algebra"—she pronounced the word with the accent on the second syllable—"divna ye, maister Cosmo?"

"Na, no the haif, nor the hun'ert pairt. I only ken eneuch to haud me gaein' on to mair. A body maun hae learnt a heap o' onything afore the licht breaks oot o' 't. Ye maun win throuw the wa' first. I doobt gien onybody un'erstan's a thing oot an' oot, sae lang's he's no ready at a moment's notice to gar anither see intil the hert o' 't; an' I canna gar ye see what's intil 't the minute ye speir't at me!"

"I'm thinkin', hooever, Cosmo, a body maun be nearhan' seein' o' himsel' afore anither can lat him see onything."

"Ye may be richt there," yielded Cosmo."—But jist lat me see whaur ye are," he went on. "I may be able to help ye, though I canna lat ye see a' at once. It wad be an ill job for them 'at needs help, gien naebody could help them but them 'at kent a' aboot a thing."

Without a word, Aggie turned and led the way to the "but-end." An iron lamp, burning the coarsest of train oil, hung against the wall, and under that she had placed the one movable table in the kitchen, which was white as scouring could make it. Upon it lay a slate and a book of algebra.

"My cousin Willie lent me the buik," said Aggie.

"What for didna ye come to me to len'ye ane? I could hae gien ye a better nor that," expostulated Cosmo.

Aggie hesitated, but, open as the day, she did not hesitate long.

She turned her face from him, and answered,

"I wantit to gie ye a surprise, Maister Cosmo. Divna ye min' tellin' me ance 'at ye saw no rizzon hoo a lassie sudna un'erstan' jist as weel's a laddie. I wantit to see whether ye was richt or wrang; an' as algebra luiket the maist oonlikly thing, I thought I wad taikle that, an' sae saddle the queston at ance. But, eh me! I'm sair feart ye was i' the wrang, Cosmo!"

"I maun du my best to pruv mysel' i' the richt," returned Cosmo. "I never said onybody cud learn a' o' themsel's, wantin' help, ye ken. There's nae mony laddies cud du that, an' feower still wad try."

They sat down together at the table, and in half an hour or so, Aggie had begun to see the faint light of at least the false dawn, as they call it, through the thickets of algebra. It was nearly midnight when Cosmo rose, and then Aggie would not let him go alone, but insisted on accompanying him to the gate of the court.

It was a curious relation between the two. While Agnes looked up to Cosmo, about two years her junior, as immeasurably her superior in all that pertained to the intellect and its range, she assumed over him a sort of general human superiority, something like that a mother will assert over the most gifted of sons. One has seen, with a kind of sacred amusement, the high priest of many literary and artistic circles, set down with rebuke by his mother, as if he had been still a boy! And I have heard the children of this world speak with like superiority of the child of light whom they loved—allowing him wondrous good, but regarding him as a kind of God's chicken: nothing is so mysterious to the children of this world as the ways of the children of light, though to themselves they seem simple enough. That Agnes never treated Cosmo with this degree of protective condescension, arose from the fact that she was very nearly as much a child of light as he; only, being a woman, she was keener

of perception, and being older, felt the more of the mother that every woman feels, and made the most of it. It was to her therefore a merely natural thing to act his protector. Indeed with respect to the Warlock family in general, she counted herself possessed of the right to serve any one of them to the last drop of her blood. From infancy she had heard the laird spoken of—without definite distinction between the present and the last—as the noblest, best, and kindest of men, as the power which had been for generations over the family of the Gracies, for their help and healing; and hence it was impressed upon her deepest consciousness, that one of the main reasons of her existence was her relation to the family of Glenwarlock.

Notwithstanding the familiarity I have shown between them—Agnes had but lately begun to put the MASTER before Cosmo's name, and as often forgot it—the girl, as they went towards the castle, although they were walking in deep dusk, and entirely alone, kept a little behind the boy—not behind his back, but on his left hand in the next rank. No spy most curious could have detected the least love-making between them, and their talk, in the still, dark air, sounded loud all the way as they went. Strange talk it would have been counted by many, and indeed unintelligible, for it ranged over a vast surface, and was the talk of two wise children, wise not above their own years only, but immeasurably above those of the prudent. Riches indubitably favour stupidity; poverty, where the heart is right, favours mental and moral development. They parted at the gate, and Cosmo went to bed.

But, although his father allowed him such plentiful liberty, and would fain have the boy feel the night holy as the day—so that no one ever asked where he had been, or at what hour he had come home—a question which, having no watch, he would have found it hard to answer—not an eye was closed in the house until his entering footsteps were heard. The grandmother lay angry at the unheard of liberty her son gave his son; it was neither decent nor in order; it was against all ancient rule of family life; she must speak about it! But she never did speak about it, for she was now in her turn afraid of the son who, without a particle of obstinacy in his composition, yet took what she called his own way. Grizzie kept grumbling to herself that the laddie was sure to come to "mischief;" but the main forms of "mischief" that ruled in her imagination were tramps, precipices, and spates. The laird, for his part, spent most of the time his son's absence kept him awake, in praying for him—not that he might be the restorer of the family, but that he might be able to accept the will of God as the best thing for family as for individual. If his boy might but reach the spirit-land unsoiled and noble, his prayers were ended.

In such experiences, the laird learned to understand how the catholics come to pray to their saints, and the Chinese to their parents and ancestors; for he frequently found himself, more especially as drowsiness began to steal upon his praying soul, seeming to hold council with his wife concerning their boy, and asking her help towards such strength for him as human beings may minister to each other.

But Cosmo went up to bed without a suspicion that the air around him was full of such holy messengers heavenward for his sake. He imagined none anxious about him—either with the anxiety of grandmother or of servant-friend or of great-hearted father.

As he passed the door of the spare room, immediately above which was his own, his dream, preceded by a cold shiver, came to his memory. But he scorned to quicken his pace, or to glance over his shoulder, as he ascended the second stair. Without any need of a candle, in the still faint twilight which is the ghosts' day, he threw off his clothes, and was presently buried in the grave of his bed, under the sod of the blankets, lapt in the death of sleep.

The moment he woke, he jumped out of bed: a new era in his life was at hand, the thought of which had been subadjacently present in his dreams, and was operative the instant he became conscious of waking life. He hurried on his clothes without care, for this dressing was but temporary. Going down the stairs like a cataract, for not a soul slept in that part but himself, and there was no fear of waking any one, then in like manner down the hill, he reached the place where, with a final dart, the torrent shot into the quiet stream of the valley, in whose channel of rock and gravel it had hollowed

a deep basin. This was Cosmo's bath—and a splendid one. His clothes were off again more quickly than he put them on, and head foremost he shot like the torrent into the boiling mass, where for a few moments he yielded himself the sport of the frothy water, and was tossed and tumbled about like a dead thing. Soon however, down in the heart of the boil, he struck out, and shooting from under the fall, rose to the surface beyond it, panting and blowing. To get out on the bank was then the work of one moment, and to plunge in again that of the next. Half a dozen times, with scarce a pause between, he thus plunged, was tossed and overwhelmed, struggled, escaped, and plunged again. Then he ran for a few moments up and down the bank to dry himself—he counted the use of a towel effeminacy, and dressing again, ran home to finish his simple toilet. If after that he read a chapter of his Bible, it was no more than was required by many a parent of many a boy who got little good of the task; but Cosmo's father had never enjoined it, on him; and when next he knelt down at his bedside, he did not merely "say his prayers." Then he took his slate, to try after something Aggie had made him know he did not understand—for the finding of our own intellectual defects, nothing is like trying to teach another. But before long, certain sensations began, to warn him there was an invention in the world called breakfast, and laying his slate aside, he went to the kitchen, where he found Grizzie making the porridge.

"Min' ye pit saut eneuch in't the day, Grizzie," he said. "It was unco wersh yesterday."

"An' what was't like thestreen (yestere'en), Cosmo?" asked the old woman, irritated at being found fault with in a matter wherein she counted herself as near perfection as ever mortal could come.

"I had nane last nicht, ye min'," answered Cosmo, "I was oot a' the evenin'."

"An' whaur got ye yer supper?"

"Ow, I didna want nane. Hoot! I'm forgettin'! Aggie gied me a quarter o' breid as I cam by, or rather as I cam awa', efter giein' her a han' wi' her algebra."

"What ca' ye that for a lass bairn to be takin' up her time wi'! I never h'ard o' sic a thing! What's the natur' o' 't, Cosmo?"

He tried to give her some far-off idea of the sort of thing algebra was, but apparently without success, for she cried at length,

"Na, sirs! I hae h'ard o' cairts, an' bogles, an' witchcraft, an' astronomy, but sic a thing as this ye bring me noo, I never did hear tell o'! What can the warl' be comin' till!—An' dis the father o' ye, laddie, ken what ye spen' yer midnicht hoors gangin' teachin' to the lass-bairns o' the country roon'?"

She was interrupted by the entrance of the laird, and they sat down to breakfast. The grandmother within the last year had begun to take hers in her own room.

Grizzie was full of anxiety to know what the laird would say to the discovery she had just made, but she dared not hazard allusion to the CONDUCT of his son, and must therefore be content to lead the conversation in the direction of it, hoping it might naturally appear. So, about the middle of Cosmo's breakfast, that is about two minutes after he had attacked his porridge, she approached her design, if not exactly the object she desired, with the remark,

"Did ye never hear the auld saw, sir—"

"Whaur's neither sun nor mune, Laich things come abune—?"

"I 'maist think I have, Grizzie," answered the laird.

"But what gars ye come ower 't noo?"

"I canna but think, sir," returned Grizzie, "as I lie i' the mirk, o' the heap o' things 'at gang to nae kirk, oot an' aboot as sharp as a gled, whan the young laird is no in his bed—oot wi' 's algibbry an' astronomy, an' a' that kin' o' thing!' Deed, sir, it wadna be canny gien they cam to ken o' 't."

"Wha come to ken o' what, Grizzie?" asked the laird with a twinkle in his eye, and a glance at Cosmo, who sat gazing curiously at the old woman.

"Them 'at the saw speyks o', sir," said Grizzie, answering the first part of the double question, as she placed two boiled eggs before her master.

The laird smiled: he was too kind to laugh. Not a few laughed at old Grizzie, but never the laird.

"Did YE never hear the auld saw, Grizzie," he said:

"Throu the heather an' how gaed the creepin' thing,  
But abune was the waught o' an angel's wing—?"

"Ay, I hae h'ard it—naegait 'cep' here i' this hoose," answered Grizzie: she would disparage the authority of the saying by a doubt as to its genuineness. "But, sir, ye sud never temp' providence. Wha kens what may be oot i' the nicht?"

"To HIM, Grizzie, the nicht shineth as the day."

"Weel, sir," cried Grizzie, "Ye jist pit me 'at I dinna ken mysel'! Is't poossible ye hae forgotten what's sae weel kent to a' the cuintry roon'?—the auld captain,'at canna lie still in's grave, because o'—because o' whatever the rizzon may be? Onygait he's no laid yet; an' some thinks he's doomed to haunt the hoose till the day o' jeedgment."

"I suspec' there winna be muckle o' the hoose left for him to haunt 'gen that time, Grizzie," said the laird. "But what for sud ye put sic fule things intil the bairn's heid? An' gien the ghaist haunt the hoose, isna he better oot o' 't? Wad ye hae him come hame to sic company?"

This posed Grizzie, and she held her peace for the time.

"Come, Cosmo," said the laird rising; and they set out together for Mr. Simon's cottage.

## CHAPTER X. PETER SIMON

This man was not a native of the district, but had for some two years now been a dweller in it. Report said he was the son of a small tradesman in a city at no great distance, but, to those who knew him, he made no secret of the fact, that he had been found by such a man, a child of a few months, lying on a pavement of that city, one stormy, desolate Christmas-eve, when it was now dark, with the wind blowing bitterly from the north, and the said tradesman seemingly the one inhabitant of the coldest city in Scotland who dared face it. He had just closed his shop, had carried home to one of his customers a forgotten order, and was returning to his wife and a childless hearth, when he all but stumbled over the infant. Before stooping to lift him, he looked all about to see if there was nobody to do it instead. There was not a human being, or even what comes next to one, a dog in sight, and the wind was blowing like a blast from a frozen hell. There was no help for it: he must take up the child! He did, and carried it home, grumbling all the way. What right had the morsel to be lying there, a trap and a gin for his character, in the dark and the cold? What would his wife say? And what would the neighbours think? All the way home he grumbled.

What happened there, how his wife received him with his burden, how she scolded and he grumbled, how it needed but the one day—the Christmas Day, in which nothing could well be done—to reconcile them to the gift, and how they brought him up, blessing the day when they found him, would be a story fit to make the truehearted of my readers both laugh and cry; but I have not room or time for it.

Of course, as they were in poor circumstances, hardly able indeed, not merely to make both ends meet, but to bring them far enough round the parcel of their necessities to let them see each other, their friends called their behaviour in refusing to hand over the brat to the parish authorities—which they felt as a reflection upon all who in similar circumstances would have done so—utter folly. But when the moon-struck pair was foolish enough to say they did not know that he might not have been sent them instead of the still-born child that had hitherto been all their offspring, this was entirely too much for the nerves of the neighbours in general—that peculiar people always better acquainted with one's affairs, down to his faults and up to his duties, than he is himself. It was rank superstition! It was a flying in the face of Providence! How could they expect to prosper, when they acted with so little foresight, rendering the struggle for existence severer still! They did not reckon what strength the additional motive, what heart the new love, what uplifting the hope of help from on high, kindled by their righteous deed, might give them—for God likes far better to help people from the inside than from the outside. They did not think that this might be just the fresh sting of life that the fainting pair required. To mark their disapproval, some of them immediately withdrew what little custom they had given them: one who had given them none, promised them the whole of hers, the moment they sent the child away; while others, with equal inconsistency, doubled theirs, and did what they could to send them fresh customers: they were a pair of good-natured fools, but they ought not to be let starve! From that time they began to get on a little better. And still as the boy grew, and wanted more, they had the little more. For it so happened that the boy turned out to be one of God's creatures, and it looked as if the Maker of him, who happened also to be the ruler of the world, was not altogether displeased with those who had taken him to their hearts, instead of leaving him to the parish. The child was the light of the house and of the shop, a beauty to the eyes, and a joy in the heart of both. But perhaps the best proof that they had done right, lay in the fact that they began to love each other better from the very next day after they took him in, for, to tell the truth, one cause of their not getting on well, had been that they did not pull well together. Thus we can explain the improvement in their circumstances by reference to merest "natural causes," without

having recourse to the distasteful idea that a power in the land of superstition, with a weakness called a special providence, was interested in the matter.

But foolishness such as theirs is apt to increase with years; and so they sent the foundling to the grammar-school, and thence to college—not a very difficult affair in that city. At college he did not greatly distinguish himself, for his special gifts, though peculiar enough, were not of a kind to **DISTINGUISH** a man much, either in that city or in this world. But he grew and prospered nevertheless, and became a master in one of the schools. His father and mother, as he called them, would gladly have made a minister of him, but of that he would never hear. He lived with them till they died, always bringing home to them his salary, minus only the little that he spent on books. His life, his devotion and loving gratitude, so wrought upon them, that the kingdom of heaven opened its doors to them, and they were the happiest old couple in that city. Of course this was all an accident, for the kingdom of heaven being but a dream, the dignity of natural cause can scarcely consent to work to the end of delusion; but the good natured pair were foolish enough to look upon their miserable foundling as a divine messenger, an angel entertained not for long unawares, and the cause of all the good luck that followed his entrance. They never spent a penny of his salary, but added to it, and saved it up, and when they went, very strangely left all they had to this same angel of a beggar, instead of to their own relations, who would have been very glad of it, for they had a good deal more of their own.

The foundling did not care to live longer in any city, but sought a place as librarian, and was successful. In the family of an English lord he lived many years, and when time's changes rendered it necessary he should depart, he retired to the cottage on the Warlock. There he was now living the quietest of quiet lives, cultivating the acquaintance of but a few—chiefly that of the laird, James Gracie, and the minister of the parish. Among the people of the neighbourhood he was regarded as "no a'thegither there." This judgment possibly arose in part from the fact that he not unfrequently wandered about the fields from morning to night, and sometimes from night to morning. Then he never drank anything worthy of the name of drink—seldom anything but water or milk! That he never ate animal food was not so notable where many never did so from one year's end to another's. As he was no propagandist, few had any notion of his opinions, beyond a general impression that they were unsound.

Cosmo had heard some of the peculiarities attributed to him, and was filled with curious expectation as to the manner of man he was about to meet, for, oddly enough, he had never yet seen him except at a distance; but anxiety, not untinged with awe, was mingled with his curiosity.

Mr. Simon's cottage was some distance up the valley, at an angle where it turned westward. It stood on the left bank of the Warlock, at the foot of a small cliff that sheltered it from the north, while in front the stream came galloping down to it from the sunset. The immediate bank between the cottage and the water was rocky and dry, but the ground on which the cottage stood was soil washed from the hills. There Mr. Simon had a little garden for flowers and vegetables, with a summer seat in which he smoked his pipe of an evening—for, however inconsistent the habit may seem with the rest of the man, smoke he did: slowly and gently and broodingly did the man smoke, thinking a great deal more than he smoked, and making his one pipe last a long time. His garden was full of flowers, but of the most ordinary kinds; rarity was no recommendation to him. Some may think that herein he was unlike himself, seeing his opinions were of the rarest; but in truth never once did Peter Simon, all his life, adopt an opinion because of its strangeness. He never **ADOPTED** an opinion at all; he believed—he loved what seemed to him true: how it looked to others he concerned himself little.

The cottage was of stone and lime, nowise the less thoroughly built that the stones were unhewn. It was **HARLED**, that is rough-cast, and shone very white both in sun and moon. It contained but two rooms and a closet between, with one under the thatch for the old woman who kept house for him. Altogether it was a very ordinary, and not very promising abode.

But when they were shown **BEN** to the parlour, Cosmo was struck with nothing less than astonishment: the walls from floor to ceiling were covered with books. Not a square foot all over



was vacant. Even the chimney-piece was absorbed, assimilated, turned into a book-shelf, and so obliterated. Mr. Simon's pipe lay on the hob; and there was not another spot where it could have lain. There was not a shelf, a cupboard to be seen. Books, books everywhere, and nothing but books! Even the door that led to the closet where he slept, was covered over, and, like the mantleshef, obliterated with books. They were but about twelve hundred in all; to the eyes of Cosmo it seemed a mighty library—a treasure-house for a royal sage.

There was no one in the room when they entered, and Cosmo was yet staring in mute astonishment, when suddenly Mr. Simon was addressing his father. But the door had not opened, and how he came in seemed inexplicable. To the eyes of the boy the small man before him assumed gigantic proportions.

But he was in truth below the middle height, somewhat round-shouldered, with long arms, and small, well-shaped hands. His hair was plentiful, grizzled, and cut short. His head was large and his forehead wide, with overhanging brows; his eyes were small, dark, and brilliant; his nose had a certain look of decision—but a nose is a creature beyond description; his mouth was large, and his chin strong; his complexion dark, and his skin rugged. The only FINE features about him were his two ears, which were delicate enough for a lady. His face was not at first sight particularly attractive; indeed it was rather gloomy—till he smiled, not a moment after; for that smile was the true interpreter of the mouth, and, through the mouth, of the face, which was never the same as before to one that had seen it. After a word or two about the book he had borrowed, the laird took his departure, saying the sooner he left master and pupil to themselves the better. Mr. Simon acquiesced with a smile, and presently Cosmo was facing his near future, not without some anxiety.

## CHAPTER XI. THE NEW SCHOOLING

Without a word, Mr. Simon opened a drawer, and taking from it about a score of leaves of paper, handed one of them to Cosmo. Upon it, in print, was a stanza—one, and no more.

"Read that," he said, with a glance that showed through his eyes the light burning inside him, "and tell me if you understand it. I don't want you to ponder over it, but to say at a reading whether you know what it means."

Cosmo obeyed and read.

"I dinna mak heid nor tail o' 't, sir," he answered, looking over the top of the paper like a prisoned sheep.

Mr. Simon took it from him, and handed him another.

"Try that," he said.

Cosmo read, put his hand to his head, and looked troubled. "Don't distress yourself," said Mr. Simon. "The thing is of no consequence for judgment; it is only for discovery."

The remark conveyed but little consolation to the pupil, who would gladly have stood well in his own eyes before his new master.

One after another Mr. Simon handed him the papers he held. About the fifth or sixth, Cosmo exclaimed,

"I do understand that, sir."

"Very well," returned Mr. Simon, without showing any special satisfaction, and immediately handed him another.

This was again a non-luminous body, and indeed cast a shadow over the face of the embryo student. One by one Mr. Simon handed him all he held. Out of the score there were three Cosmo said he understood, and four he thought he should understand if he were allowed to read them over two or three times. But Mr. Simon laid them all together again, and back into the drawer.

"Now I shall know what I am about," he said. "Tell me what you have been doing at school."

Were my book a treatise on education, it might be worth while to give some account of Peter Simon's ways of furthering human growth. But intellectual development is not my main business or interest, and I mean to say little more concerning Cosmo's than that, after about six weeks' work, the boy one day begged Mr. Simon to let him look at those papers again, and found to his delight that he understood all but three or four of them.

That first day, Mr. Simon gave him an ode of Horace, and a poem by Wordsworth to copy—telling him to put in every point as it was in the book exactly, but to note any improvement he thought might be made in the pointing. He told him also to look whether he could see any resemblance between the two poems.

As he sat surrounded by the many books, Cosmo felt as if he were in the heart of a cloud of witnesses.

That first day was sufficient to make the heart of the boy cleave to his new master. For one thing Mr. Simon always, in anything done, took note first of the things that pleased him, and only after that proceeded to remark on the faults—most of which he treated as imperfections, letting Cosmo see plainly that he understood how he had come to go wrong.

Such an education as Mr. Simon was thus attempting with Cosmo, is hardly to be given to more than one at a time; and indeed there are not a great many boys on whom it would be much better than lost labour. Cosmo, however, was now almost as eager to go to his lessons, as before to spend a holiday. Mr. Simon never gave him anything to do at home, heartily believing it the imperative duty of a teacher to leave room for the scholar to grow after the fashion in which he is made, and

that what a boy does by himself is of greater import than what he does with any master. Such leisure may indeed be of comparatively small consequence with regard to the multitude of boys, but it is absolutely necessary wherever one is born with his individuality so far determined, as to be on the point of beginning to develop itself. When Cosmo therefore went home, he read or wrote what he pleased, wandered about at his will, and dreamed to his heart's content. Nor was it long before he discovered that his dreams themselves were becoming of greater import to him—that they also were being influenced by Mr. Simon. And there were other witnesses there, quite as silent as those around him in the library, and more unseen, who would not remain speechless or invisible always.

One day Cosmo came late, and to say there were traces of tears on his cheeks would hardly be correct, for his eyes were swollen with weeping. His master looked at him almost wistfully, but said nothing until he had settled for a while to his work, and was a little composed. He asked him then what was amiss, and the boy told him. To most boys it would have seemed small ground for such heart-breaking sorrow.

Amongst the horses on the farm, was a certain small mare, which, although she worked as hard as any, was yet an excellent one to ride, and Cosmo, as often as there was not much work doing, rode her where he would, and boy and mare were much attached to each other. Sometimes he would have her every day for several weeks, and that would be in the prime of the summer weather, when the harvest was drawing nigh, and the school had its long yearly holiday. Summer, the harvest—"play," and Linty!—oh, large bliss! my heart swells at the thought. They would be out for hours together, perhaps not far from home all the time—on the top of a hill it might be, whence Cosmo could see when he would the castle below. There, the whole sleepy afternoon, he would lie in the heather, with Linty, the mare, feeding amongst it, ready to come at his call, receive him on her back, and carry him where he would!

But alas! though supple and active, Linty was old, and the day could not be distant when they must part company: she was then nine and twenty. And now—the night before, she had been taken ill: there was a disease about amongst the horses. The men had been up with her all night, and Grizzie too: she had fetched her own pillow and put under her head, then sat by it for hours. When Cosmo left, she was a little better, but great fears were entertained as to the possibility of her recovery.

"She's sae terrible aul'! ye see, sir," said Cosmo, as he ended his tale of woe, and burst out crying afresh.

"Cosmo," said Mr. Simon,—and to a southern ear the issuing of such sweet solemn thoughts in such rough northern speech, might have seemed strange, though, to be sure, the vowels were finely sonorous if the consonants were harsh,—"Cosmo, your heart is faithful to your mare, but is it equally faithful to him that made your mare?"

"I ken it's his wull," answered Cosmo:—his master never took notice whether he spoke in broad Scotch or bastard English—"I ken mears maun dee, but eh! SHE was sic a guid ane!—Sir! I canna bide it."

"Ye ken wha sits by the deein' sparrow?" said Mr. Simon, himself taking to the dialect. "Cosmo there was a better nor Grizzie, an' nearer to Linty a' the lang nicht. Things warna gangin' sae ill wi' her as ye thought. Life's an awfu' mystery, Cosmo, but it's jist the ae thing the maker o' 't can haud nearest til, for it's nearest til himsel' i' the mak o' 't.—Fowk may tell me," he went on, more now as if he were talking to himself than to the boy, "'at I sud content mysel' wi' what I see an' hear, an' lat alane sic eeseless speculations! wi' deein' men an' mears a' about me, hoo can I! They're onything but eeseless to me, for gien I had naething but what I see an' hear, gran' an' bonny as a heap o' 't is, I wad jist smore for want o' room."

"But what's the guid o' 't a', whan I'll never see her again?" sobbed Cosmo.

"Wha says sic a thing, laddie?"

"A' body," answered Cosmo, a good deal astonished at the question.

"Maister A' body has a heap o' the gawk in him yet, Cosmo," replied his master. "Infac' he's scarce mair nor an infant yet, though he wull speyk as gien the haill universe o' wisdom an' knowledge war open til 'im! There's no a word o' the kin' i' the haill Bible, nor i' the hert o' man—nor i' the hert o' the Maker, do I, i' the hert o' me, believe Cosmo, can YE believe 'at that wee bit foal o' an ass 'at carriet the maister o' 's, a' alang yon hill-road frae Bethany to Jerus'lem, cam to sic an ill hin 'er en' as to be forgotten by him he cairriet? No more can I believe that jist 'cause it carriet him it was ae hair better luiket efter nor ony ither bit assie foalt i' the lan' o' Isr'el."

"The disciples micht hae min't it til the cratur, an' liukit efter him for't," suggested Cosmo. His master looked pleased.

"They could but work the will o' him that made the ass," he said, "an does the best for a' thing an' a' body. Na, na, my son! gien I hae ony pooer to read the trowth o' things, the life 'at's gien is no taen; an' whatever come o' the cratur, the love it waukent in a human breist, ill no more be lost than the objec' o' the same. That a thing can love an' be loved—an' that's yer bonnie mearie, Cosmo—is jist a' ane to savin' 'at it's immortal, for God is love, an' whatever partakes o' the essence o' God canna dee, but maun gang on livin' till it please him to say haud, an' that he'll never say."

By this time the face of the man was glowing like an altar on which had descended the fire of the highest heaven. His confidence entered the heart of Cosmo, and when the master ceased, he turned, with a sigh of gladness and relief, to his work, and wept no more. The possible entrance of Linty to an enlarged existence, widened the whole heaven of his conscious being; the well-spring of personal life within him seemed to rush forth in mighty volume; and through that grief and its consolation, the boy made a great stride towards manhood.

One day in the first week of his new schooling, Cosmo took occasion to mention Aggie's difficulty with her algebra, and her anxiety to find whether it was true that a girl could do as well as a boy. Mr. Simon was much interested, and with the instinct of the true hunter, whose business it is to hunt death for the sake of life, began to think whether here might not be another prepared to receive. He knew her father well, but had made no acquaintance with Agnes yet, who indeed was not a little afraid of him, for he looked as if he were always thinking about things nobody else knew of, although, in common with every woman who saw it, she did find his smile reassuring. No doubt the peculiar feeling of the neighbours concerning him had caused her involuntarily to associate with him the idea of something "no canny." Not the less, when she heard from Cosmo what sort of man his new master was, would she have given all she possessed to learn of him. And before long, she had her chance. Old Dorothy, Mr. Simon's servant and housekeeper was one day taken ill, and Cosmo mentioning the fact in Aggie's hearing, she ran, with a mere word to her mother, and not a moments' cogitation, to offer her assistance till she was better.

It turned out that "auld Dorty," as the neighbours called her, not without some hint askance at the quality of her temper, was not very seriously ailing, yet sufficiently so to accept a little help for the rougher work of the house; and while Aggie was on her knees washing the slabs of the passage that led through to the back door, the master, as she always called him now that Cosmo was his pupil, happened to come from his room, and saw and addressed her. She rose in haste, mechanically drying her hands in her apron.

"How's the algebra getting on, Agnes?" he said.

"Naething's gettin' on verra weel sin' maister Cosmo gaed frae the schuil, sir. I dinna seem to hae the hert for the learnin' 'at I had sae lang as he was there, sae far aheid o' me, but no a'thegither oot 'o my sicht, like.—It soon's a conceitit kin' o' a thing to say, but I'm no meanin' onything o' that natur', sir."

"I understand you very well, Agnes," returned the master. "Would you like to have some lessons with me? I don't say along with Cosmo; you would hardly be able for that at present, I fancy—but at such times as you could manage to come—odd times, when you were not wanted."

"There's naething upo' the airth, sir," said Aggie, "'at I wad like half sae weel. Thae jist a kin' o' a hoonger upo' me for un'erstan'in' things. Its frae bein' sae muckle wi' Maister Cosmo, I'm thinkin'—ever sin' he was a bairn, ye ken, sir; for bein' twa year aul'er nor him, I was a kin' o' a wee nursie til him; an' ever sin' syne we hae had nae secrets frae ane anither; an' ye ken what he's like—aye wantin' to win at the boddom o' things, an' that's infeckit me, sae 'at I canna rist whan I see onybody un'erstan'in' a thing, till I set about gettin' a grip o' 't mysel'."

"A very good infection to take, Agnes," replied the master, with a smile of thorough pleasure, "and one that will do more for you than the cow-pox. Come to me as often as you can—and as you like. I think I shall be able to tell you some things to make you happier."

"Deed, sir. I'm in no want o' happiness! O' that I hae full mair nor I deserve; but I want a heap for a' that. I canna say what it is, for the hoonger is for what I haena."

"Another of God's children!" said the master to himself, "and full of the groanings of the spirit! The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them."

He often quoted scripture as the people of the New Testament did—not much minding the original application of the words. Those that are filled with the spirit, have always taken liberties with the letter.

That very evening before she went home, they had a talk about algebra, and several other things. Agnes went no more to school, but almost every day to see the master, avoiding the hours when Cosmo would be there.

## CHAPTER XII. GRANNIE'S GHOST STORY

Things went on very quietly. The glorious days of harvest came and went, and left the fields bare for the wintry revelling of great blasts. The potatoes were all dug up, and again buried—deeper than before, in pits, with sheets of straw and blankets of earth to protect them from the biting of the frost. Their stalks and many weeds with them were burned, and their ashes scattered. Some of the land was ploughed, and some left till the spring. Before the autumn rains the stock of peats was brought from the hill, where they had been drying through the hot weather, and a splendid stack they made. Coal was carted from the nearest sea-port, though not in such quantity as the laird would have liked, for money was as scarce as ever, and that is to put its lack pretty strongly. Everything available for firewood was collected, and, if of any size, put under saw and axe, then stored in the house. Good preparation was thus made for the siege of the winter.

In their poverty, partly no doubt from consideration, they seemed to be much forgotten. The family was like an old thistle-head, withering on its wintry stalk, alone in a wind-swept field. All the summer through not a single visitor, friend or stranger, had slept in the house. A fresh face was more of a wonder to Cosmo than to desert-haunting Abraham. The human heart, like the human body, can live without much variety to feed on, but its house is built on a lordly scale for hospitality, and is capable of welcoming every new face as a new revelation. Steadily Cosmo went to his day's work with the master, steadily returned to his home; saw nothing new, yet learned day by day, as he went and came, to love yet more, not the faces of the men and women only, but the aspects of the country in which he was born, to read the lines and shades of its varying beauty: if it was not luxuriant enough to satisfy his ideal, it had yet endless loveliness to disclose to him who already loved enough to care to understand it. When the autumn came, it made him sad, for it was not in harmony with the forward look of his young life, which, though not ambitious, was vaguely expectant. But when the hoar frosts appeared, when the clouds gathered, when the winds began to wail, and the snows to fall, then his spirits rose to meet the invading death. The old castle grew grayer and grayer outside, but ruddier and merrier within. Oh, that awful gray and white Scottish winter—dear to my heart as I sit and write with window wide open to the blue skies of Italy's December!

Cosmo kept up his morning bath in "the pot" as long as he could, but when sleet and rain came, and he could no longer dry himself by running about, he did not care for it longer, but waited for the snow to come in plenty, which was a sure thing, for then he had a substitute. It came of the ambition of hardy endurance, and will scarcely seem credible to some of my readers. In the depth of the winter, when the cold was at its strongest, provided only the snow lay pretty deep, he would jump from his warm bed with the first glimmer of the morning, and running out, in a light gray with the grayness of what is frozen, to a hollow on the hillside a few yards from the house, there pull off his night-garment, and roll in the snow, kneading handfuls of it, and rubbing himself with it all over. Thus he believed he strengthened himself to stand the cold of the day; and happily he was strong enough to stand the strengthening, and so increased his hardihood: what would have been death to many was to him invigoration. He knew nothing of boxing, or rowing, or billiards, but he could run and jump well, and ride very fairly, and, above all, he could endure. In the last harvest he had for the first time wielded a scythe, and had held his own with the rest, though, it must be allowed, with a fierce struggle. The next spring—I may mention it here—he not only held the plough, but by patient persistence and fearless compulsion trained two young bulls to go in it, saving many weeks' labour of a pair of horses. It filled his father with pride, and hope for his boy's coming fight with the world. Even the eyes of his grandmother would after that brighten at mention of him; she began to feel proud that she had a share in the existence of the lad: if he did so well when a hobbledehoy, he might be something by the

time he was a man! But one thing troubled her: he was no sportsman; he never went out to hunt the otter, or to shoot hares or rabbits or grouse or partridges! and that was unnatural! The fact was, ever since that talk with the master about Linty, he could not bear to kill anything, and was now and then haunted by the dying eyes of the pigeon he shot the first time he handled a gun. The grandmother thought it a defect in his manhood that he did not like shooting; but, woman, and old woman as she was, his heart was larger and tenderer than hers, and got in the way of the killing.

His father had never troubled his young life with details concerning the family affairs; he had only let him know that, for many years, through extravagance and carelessness in those who preceded his father, things had been going from bad to worse. But this was enough to wake in the boy the desire, and it grew in him as he grew, to rescue what was left of the estate from its burdens, and restore it to independence and so to honour. He said nothing of it, however, to his father, feeling the presumption of proposing to himself what his father had been unable to effect.

He went oftener to the village this winter than before, and rarely without going to see Mistress Forsyth, whom he, like the rest, always called Grannie. She suffered much from rheumatism, which she described as a sorrow in her bones. But she never lost her patience, and so got the good of a trouble which would seem specially sent as the concluding discipline of old people for this world, that they may start well in the next. Before the winter set in, the laird had seen that she was provided with peats—that much he could do, because it cost him nothing but labour; and indeed each of the several cart-loads Cosmo himself had taken, with mare Linty between the shafts. But no amount of fire could keep the frost out of the old woman's body, or the sorrow out of her bones. Hence she had to be a good deal in bed, and needed her great-grandchild, Agnes, to help her to bear her burden. When the bitter weather came, soon after Christmas, Agnes had to be with her almost constantly. She had grown a little graver, but was always cheerful, and, except for anxiety lest her mother should be overworked, or her father take cold, seemed as happy with her grandmother as at home.

One afternoon, when the clouds were rising, and the wind blew keen from the north, Cosmo left Glenwarlock to go to the village—mainly to see Grannie. He tramped the two miles and a half in all the joy of youthful conflict with wind and weather, and reached the old woman's cottage radiant. The snow lay deep and powdery with frost, and the struggle with space from a bad footing on the world had brought the blood to his cheeks and the sparkle to his eyes. He found Grannie sitting up in bed, and Aggie getting her tea—to which Cosmo contributed a bottle of milk he had carried her—an article rare enough in the winter when there was so little grass for the cows. Aggie drew the old woman's chair to the fire for him, and he sat down and ate barley-meal scones, and drank tea with them. Grannie was a little better than usual, for every disease has its inconsistencies, and pain will abate before an access; and so, with storm at hand, threaded with fiery flying serpents for her bones, she was talking more than for days previous. Her voice came feebly from the bed to Cosmo's ears, while he leaned back in her great chair, and Aggie was removing the tea-things.

"Did ye ever dream ony mair about the auld captain, Cosmo?" she asked: from her tone he could not tell whether she spoke seriously, or was amusing herself with the idea.

"No ance," he answered. "What gars ye speir, Grannie?"

She said nothing for a few minutes, and Cosmo thought she had dismissed the subject. Aggie had returned to her seat, and he was talking with her about Euclid, when she began again; and this time her voice revealed that she was quite in earnest.

"Ye're weel nigh a man noo, Cosmo," she said. "A body may daur speyk to ye aboot things a body wadna be wullin' to say till a bairn for fear o' frichtin' o' 'im mair nor the bit hert o' 'm cud stan'. Whan a lad can warstle wi' a pair o' bills, an' get the upper han' o' them, an' gar them du his biddin', he wadna need to tak fricht at—" There she paused.

This preamble was enough in itself—not exactly to bring Cosmo's heart into his mouth, but to send a little more of his blood from his brain to his heart than was altogether welcome there. His imagination, however, was more eager than apprehensive, and his desire to hear far greater than his

dread of the possible disclosure. Neither would he have turned his back on any terror, though he knew well enough what fear was. He looked at Aggie as much as to say, "What can be coming?" and she stared at him in turn with dilated pupils, as if something dreadful were about to be evoked by the threatened narrative. Neither spoke a word, but their souls got into their ears, and there sat listening. The hearing was likely to be frightful when so prefaced by Grannie.

"There's no guid ever cam' o' ca'in' things oot o' their ain names," she began, "an' it's my min' 'at gien ever ae man was a willain, an' gien ever ae man had rizzon no to lie quaiet whan he was doon, that man was your father's uncle—his gran' uncle, that is, the auld captain, as we ca'd him. Fowk said he saul' his sowl to the ill ane: hoo that may be, I wadna care to be able to tell; but sure I am 'at his was a sowl ill at ease,—baith here an' herefter. Them 'at sleepit aneth me, for there was twa men-servan's about the hoose that time—an' troth there was need o' them an' mair, sic war the gangin's on! an' they sleepit whaur I'm tauld ye sleep noo, Cosmo—them 'at sleepit there tellt me 'at never a nicht passed 'at they h'ardna soon's 'aneth them 'at there was no mainner o' accoontin' for nor explainin', as fowks sae set upo' duin' nooadays wi' a' thing. That explainin' I canna bide: it's jist a love o' leasin', an' taks the bluid oot o' a' thing, lea'in' life as wersh an' fusionless as kail wantin' saut. Them 'at h'ard it tellt me 'at there was NO accoontin', as I tell you, for the reemish they baith h'ard—whiles douf-like dunts, an' whiles speech o' mou', beggin' an' groanin' as gien the enemy war bodily present to the puir sinner."

"He micht hae been but jabberin' in's sleep," Cosmo, with his love of truth, ventured to suggest: Aggie gave him a nudge of warning.

"Ay micht it," returned the old woman with calm scorn; "an' it micht nae doobt hae been snorin', or a cat speykin' wi' man's tongue, or ony ane o' mony things 'cep' the trowth 'at ye're no wullin' to hear."

"I AM wullin'—to hear the warst trowth ye daur tell me, Grannie," cried Cosmo, terrified lest he had choked the fountain. He was more afraid of losing the story than of hearing the worst tale that could be told even about the room he slept in last night, and must go back to sleep in again to-night.

Grannie was mollified, and went on.

"As I was sayin', he micht weel be ill at ease, the auld captain, gien ae half was true 'at was said o' 'im; but I 'maist think yer father coontit it priven 'at he had led a deevilich life amo' the pirates. Only, gien he did, whaur was the wauges o' his ineequity? Nae doobt he got the wauges 'at the apostle speyks o', whilk is, as ye well ken, deith—'the wauges o' sin is deith.' But, maistly, sic-like sinners get first wauges o' anither speckle frae the maister o' them. For troth! he has no need to be near in's dealin's wi' them, seein' there's nae buyin' nor sellin' whaur he is, an' a' the gowd he has doon yon'er i' the boodels o' the yird, wad jist lie there duin' naething, gien he sent na 't up abune, whaur maist pairt it works his wull. Na, he seldom scrimps 't to them 'at follows his biddin'. But i' this case, whaur, I say, was the wauges? Natheless, he aye carriet himsel' like ane 'at cud lay doon the law o' this warl', an' cleemt no sma' consideration; yet was there never sign or mark o' the proper fundation for sic assumption o' the richt to respec'.

"It turnt oot, or cam to be said, 'at the Englishman 'at fowk believed to hae killt him, was far-awa' sib to the faimily, an' the twa had come thegither afore, somewhaur i' foreign pairts. But that's naither here nor there, nor what for he killed him, or wha's faut was that same: aboot a' that, naething was ever kent for certain.

"Weel, it was an awfu' like thing, ye may be sure, to quaiet fowk, sic as we was a'—'cep' for the drinkin' an' sic like, sin' ever the auld captain cam, wi' his reprobat w'ys—it was a sair thing, I'm sayin', to hae a deid man a' at ance upo' oor han's; for, lat the men du 'at they like, the warst o' 't aye comes upo' the women. Lat a bairn come to mischance, or the guidman turn ower the kettle, an' it's aye, 'Rin for Jean this, or Bauby that,' to set richt what they hae set wrang. Even whan a man kills a body, it's the women hae to mak the best o' 't, an' the corp luik dacent. An' there's some o' them no that easy to mak luik dacent! Troth, there's mony ane luiks bonnier deid nor alive, but that wasna the case wi' the auld captain, for he luikit as gien he had dee'd cursin', as he bude to du, gien he dee'd



as he lived. His moo' was drawn fearfu', as gien his last aith had chokit him. Nae doobt they said 'at wad hae't they kent,'at hoo that's the w'y wi' deith frae slayin' wi' the swoord; but I wadna hear o' 't; I kenned better. An' whether he had fair play or no, the deith he dee'd was a just ane; for them 'at draws the swoord maun periss by the swoord. Whan they faun' 'im, the richt ban' o' the corp was streekit oot, as gien he was cryin' to somebody rinnin' awa' to bide an' tak 'im wi' 'im. But there was anither at han' to tak 'im wi' 'im. Only, gien he tuik 'im that same nicht, he cudna hae carried him far. 'Deed, maybe, the auld sinner was ower muckle aven for HIM.

"They brocht him hame, an' laid the corp o' him upo' his ain bed, whaur, I reckon, up til this nicht, he had tried mair nor he had sleepit. An' that verra nicht, wha sud I see—but I'm jist gaein' to tell ye a' about it, an' hoo it was, an' syne ye can say yersel's. Sin' my ain auld mither dee'd, I haena opent my moo' to mortal upo' the subjec'."

The eyes of the two listeners were fixed upon the narrator in the acme of expectation. A real ghost-story, from the lips of one they knew, and must believe in, was a thing of dread delight. Like ghosts themselves, they were all-unconscious of body, rapt in listening.

"Ye may weel believe," resumed the old woman after a short pause, "at nane o' 's was ower wullin' to sit wi' the corp oor lane, for, as I say, he wasna a comely corp to be a body's lane wi'. Sae auld auntie Jean an' mysel', we agreed 'at we wad tak the thing upo' oorsel's, for, huz twa, we cud lippen til ane anither no to be ower feart to min' 'at there was twa o' 's. There hadna been time yet for the corp to be laid intil the coffin, though, i' the quaiet o' the mirk, we thought, as we sat, we cud hear the tap-tappin' as they cawed the braiss nails intil't, awa' ower in Geordie Lumsden's chop, at the Muir o' Warlock, a twa mile, it wad be. We war sittin', auntie Jean an' mysel', i' the mids o' the room, no wi' oor backs til the bed, nor yet wi' oor faces, for we daurna turn aither o' them til't. I' the ae case, wha cud tell what we micht see, an' i' the ither, wha cud tell what micht be luikin' at hiz! We war sittin', I say, wi' oor faces to the door o' the room, an' auntie was noddin' a wee, for she was turnin' gey an' auld, but I was as wide waukin' an ony baudrins by a moose-hole, whan suddent there came a kin' o' a dirlin' at the sneck,'at sent the verra sowl o' me up intil the garret o' my heid; an' afore I had time to ken hoo sair frichtit I was, the door begud to open; an', glower as I wad, no believin' my ain e'en, open that door did, langsome, langsome, quaiet, quaiet, jist as my auld Grannie used to tell o' the deid man comin' doon the lum, bit an' bit, an' jinin' thegither upo' the flure. I was turnt to stane, like,'at I didna believe I cud hae fa'en frae the cheir gien I had swarfed clean awa'. An' eh but it tuik a time to open that door! But at last, as sure as ye sit there, you twa, an' no anither, —"—At the word, Cosmo's heart came swelling up into his throat, but he dared not look round to assure himself that they were indeed two sitting there and not another—"in cam the auld captain, ae fit efter anither! Speir gien I was sure o' 'im! Didna I ken him as weel as my ain father—as weel's my ain minister—as weel as my ain man? He cam in, I say, the auld captain himsel'—an' eh, sic an evil luik!—the verra luik deith—frozen upo' the face o' the corp! The live bluid turned to dubs i' my inside. He cam on an' on, but no straucht for whaur we sat, or I dinna think the sma' rizzon I had left wad hae bidden wi' me, but as gien he war haudin' for 's bed. To tell God's trowth, for I daurna lee, for fear o' haein' to luik upo' 's like again, my auld auntie declaret efterhin 'at she saw naething. She bude til hae been asleep, an' a mercifu' thing it was for her, puir body! but she didna live lang efter. He made straucht for the bed, as I thought.' The Lord preserve's!' thought I,' is he gaein to lie doon wi' 's ain corp?' but he turnt awa', an' roon' the fit o' the bed to the ither side o' 't, an' I saw nae mair; an' for a while, auntie Jean sat her lane wi' the deid, for I lay upo' the flure, an' naither h'ard nor saw. But whan I came to mysel', wasna I thankfu' 'at I wasna deid, for he micht hae gotten me than, an' there was nae sayin' what he micht hae dune til me! But, think ye, wad auntie Jean believe 'at I had seen him, or that it was onything but a dream 'at had come ower me, atween waukin' an' sleepin'! Na, no she! for she had sleepit throu' 't hersel'!"

For some time silence reigned, as befitted the close of such a story. Nothing but the solemn tick of the tall clock was to be heard. On and on it went, as steady as before. Ghosts were nothing special to the clock: it had to measure out the time both for ghosts and unghosts.

"But what cud the ghaist hae been wantin'? No the corp, for he turnt awa', ye tell me, frae hit," Cosmo ventured at length to remark.

"Wha can say what ghaists may be efter, laddie! But, troth to tell, whan ye see live fowk sae gien ower to the boady, 'at they're never happy but whan they're aitin' or drinkin' or sic like—an' the auld captain was seldom throu' wi' his glaiss, 'at he wasna cryin' for the whisky or the het watter for the neist—whan the boady's the best half o' them, like, an' they maun aye be duin' something wi' 't, ye needna won'er 'at the ghaist o' ane sic like sud fin' himsel' geyan eerie an' lonesome like, wantin' his seck to fill, an' sae try to win back to hae a luik hoo it was weirin'."

"But he gaed na to the corp," Cosmo insisted.

"'Cause he wasna alloot," said Grannie. "He wad hae been intil't again in a moment, ye may be certain, gien it had been in his pooer. But the deevils cudna gang intil the swine wantin' leave."

"Ay, I see," said Cosmo.

"But jist ye speir at yer new maister," Grannie went on, "what he thinks aboot it, for I ance h'ard him speyk richt wise words to my gudeson, James Gracie, anent sic things. I min' weel 'at he said the only thing 'at made agen the viouw I tiuk—though I spakna o' the partic'lar occasion—was, 'at naebody ever h'ard tell o' the ghaist o' an alderman, wha they say's some grit Lon'on man, sair gien to the fillin' o' the seck."

## CHAPTER XIII. THE STORM-GUEST

Again a deep silence descended on the room. The twilight had long fallen, and settled down into the dark. The only thing that acknowledged and answered the clock was the red glow of the peats on the hearth. To Cosmo, as he sat sunk in thought, the clock and the fire seemed to be holding a silent talk. Presently came a great and sudden blast of wind, which roused Cosmo, and made him bethink himself that it was time to be going home. And for this there was another reason besides the threatening storm: he had the night before begun to read aloud one of Sir Walter's novels to the assembled family, and Grizzie would be getting anxious for another portion of it before she went to bed.

"I'm glaid to see ye sae muckle better, Grannie," he said. "I'll say gude nicht noo, an' luik in again the morn."

"Weel, I'm obleeged to ye," replied the old woman. "There's been but feow o' yer kin, be their fau'ts what they micht, wad forget ony 'at luikit for a kin' word or a kin' deed!—Aggie, lass, ye'll convoy him a bittock, willna ye?"

All the few in whom yet lingered any shadow of retainership towards the fast-fading chieftainship of Glenwarlock, seemed to cherish the notion that the heir of the house had to be tended and cared for like a child—that was what they were in the world for. Doubtless a pitying sense of the misfortunes of the family had much to do with the feeling.

"There's nae occasion," and "I'll du that," said the two young people in a breath.

Cosmo rose, and began to put on his plaid, crossing it over back and chest to leave his arms free: that way the wind would get least hold on him. Agnes went to the closet for her plaid also—of the same tartan, and drawing it over her head and pinning it under her chin, was presently ready for the stormy way. Then she turned to Cosmo, and was pinning his plaid together at the throat, when the wind came with a sudden howl, rushed down the chimney, and drove the level smoke into the middle of the room. It could not shake the cottage—it was too lowly: neither could it rattle its windows—they were not made to open; but it bellowed over it like a wave over a rock, and as in contempt blew its smoke back into its throat.

"It'll be a wull nicht, I'm doobtin', Cosmo," said Agnes; "an' I wuss ye safe i' the ingle-neak wi' yer fowk."

Cosmo laughed. "The win' kens me," he said.

"Guid farbid!" cried the old woman from the bed.

"Kenna ye wha's the prence o' 't, laddie? Makna a jeist o' the pooers 'at be."

"Gien they binna ordeent o' God, what are they but a jeist?" returned Cosmo. "Eh, but ye wad mak a bonny munsie o' me, Grannie, to hae me feart at the deil an' a'! I canna a' thegither help it wi' the ghaists, an' I'm ashamed o' mysel' for that; but I AM NOT gaein to heed the deil. I defy him an' a' his works. He's but a cooerd, ye ken, Grannie, for whan ye resist him, he rins."

She made no answer. Cosmo shook hands with her, and went, followed by Agnes, who locked the door behind her, and put the key in her pocket.

It was indeed a wild night. The wind was rushing from the north, full of sharp stinging pellicles, something between snow-flakes and hail-stones. Down the wide village street it came right in their faces. Through it, as through a thin shifting sheet, they saw on both sides the flickering lights of the many homes, but before them lay darkness, and the moor, a chaos, a carnival of wind and snow. Worst of all the snow on the road was not BINDING, and their feet felt as if walking on sand. As long as the footing is good, one can get on even in the face of a northerly storm; but to heave with a shifting fulcrum is hard. Nevertheless Cosmo, beholding with his mind's eye the wide waste around

him, rejoiced; invisible through the snow, it was not the less a presence, and his young heart rushed to the contest. There was no fear of ghosts in such a storm! The ghosts might be there, but there was no time to heed them, and that was as good as their absence—perhaps better, if we knew all.

"Bide a wee, Cosmo," cried Agnes, and leaving him in the middle of the street where they were walking, she ran across to one of the houses, and entered—lifting the latch without ceremony. No neighbour troubled another to come and open the door; if there was no one at home, the key in the lock outside showed it.

Cosmo turned his back to the wind, and stood waiting. From the door which Aggie opened, came through the wind and snow the sound of the shoemaker's hammer on his lapstone.

"Cud ye spare the mistress for an hoor, or maybe twa an' a half, to haud Grannie company, John Nauchty?" said Agnes.

"Weel that," answered the SUTOR, hammering away. He intended no reflection on the bond that bound the mistress and himself.

"I dinna see her," said Aggie.

"She'll be in in a minute. She's run ower the ro'd to get a doup o' a can'le," returned the man.

"Gien she dinna the speedier, she'll hae to licht it to fin' her ain door," said Agnes merrily, to whom the approaching fight with the elements was as welcome as to Cosmo. She had made up her mind to go with him all the way, let him protest as he might.

"Ow na! she'll hearken, an' hear the hemmer," replied the shoemaker.

"Weel, tak the key, an' ye winna forget, John?" said Aggie, laying the key amongst his tools. "Grannie's lyin' there her lee-lane, an' gien the hoose was to tak fire, what wad come o' her?"

"Guid forbid onybody sud forget Grannie!" rejoined the man heartily; "but fire wad hae a sma' chance the nicht."

Agnes thanked and left him. All the time he had not missed a single stroke of his hammer on the benleather between it and his lapstone.

When she rejoined Cosmo, where he stood leaning his back against the wind in the middle of the road,

"Come nae farther, Aggie," he said. "It's an ill nicht, an' grows waur. There's nae guid in't naither, for we winna hear ane anither speyk ohn stoppit, an' turnt oor backs til't. Gang to yer Grannie; she'll be feart about ye."

"Nae a bit. I maun see ye oot o' the toon."

They fought their way along the street, and out on the open moor, the greater part of which was still heather and swamp. Peat-bog and ploughed land was all one waste of snow. Creation seemed but the snow that had fallen, the snow that was falling, and the snow that had yet to fall; or, to put it otherwise, a fall of snow between two outspread worlds of snow.

"Gang back, noo, Aggie," said Cosmo again. "What's the guid o' twa whaur ane only need be, an' baith hae to fecht for themsel's?"

"I'm no gaein' back yet," persisted Aggie. "Twa's better at onything nor ane himblane. The sutor's wife's gaein' in to see Grannie, an' Grannie 'll like her cracks a heap better nor mine. She thinks I hae nae mair brains nor a hen, 'cause I canna min' upo' things at war nearhan' forgotten or I was born."

Cosmo desisted from useless persuasion, and they struggled on together, through the snow above and the snow beneath. At this Aggie was more than a match for Cosmo. Lighter and smaller, and perhaps with larger lungs in proportion, she bored her way through the blast better than he, and the moment he began to expostulate, would increase the distance between them, and go on in front where he knew she could not hear a word he said.

At last, being then a little ahead, she turned her back to the wind, and waited for him to come up.

"Noo, ye've had eneuch o' 't!" he said. "An' I maun turn an' gang back wi' you, or ye'll never win hame."

Aggie broke into a loud laugh that rang like music through the storm.

"A likly thing!" she cried; "an' me wi' my back a' the ro'd to the win'! Gang back yersel', Cosmo, an' sit by Grannie's fire, an' I'll gang on to the castle, an' lat them ken whaur ye are. Gien ye dinna that, I tell ye ance for a', I'm no gaein' to lea' ye till I see ye safe inside yer ain wa's."

"But Aggie," reasoned Cosmo, with yet greater earnestness, "what'll ye gar fowk think o' me, 'at wad hae a lassie to gang hame wi' me, for fear the win' micht blaw me intil the sea? Ye'll bring me to shame, Aggie."

"A lassie! say ye?" cried Aggie,—"I think I hear ye!—an' me auld eneuch to be yer mither! Is' tak guid care there s' be nae affront intil 't. Haud yer hert quaiet, Cosmo; ye'll hae need o' a' yer breath afore ye win to yer ain fireside."

As she spoke, the wind pounced upon them with a fiercer gust than any that had preceded. Instinctively they grasped each other, as if from the wish, if they should be blown away, to be blown away together.

"Eh, that's a rouch ane!" said Cosmo, and again Aggie laughed merrily.

While they stood thus, with their backs to the wind, the moon rose. Far indeed from being visible, she yet shed a little glimmer of light over the plain, revealing a world as wild as ever the frozen north outspread—as wild as ever poet's despairing vision of desolation. I see it! I see it! but how shall I make my reader see it with me? It was ghastly. The only similitude of life was the perplexed and multitudinous motion of the drifting, falling flakes. No shape was to be seen, no sound but that of the wind to be heard. It was like the dream of a delirious child after reading the ancient theory of the existence of the world by the rushing together of fortuitous atoms. Wan and thick, tumultuous, innumerable to millions of angels, an interminable tempest of intermingling and indistinguishable vortices, it stretched on and on, a boundless hell of cold and shapelessness—white thinned with gray, and fading into gray blackness, into tangible darkness.

The moment the fury of the blast abated, Agnes turned, and without a word, began again her boring march, forcing her way through the palpable obstructions of wind and snow. Unable to prevent her, Cosmo followed. But he comforted himself with the thought, that, if the storm continued he would get his father to use his authority against her attempting a return before the morning. The sutor's wife was one of Grannie's best cronies, and there was no fear of her being deserted through the night.

Aggie kept the lead she had taken, till there could be no more question of going on, and they were now drawing near the road that struck off to the left, along the bank of the Warlock river, leading up among the vallies and low hills, most of which had once been the property of the house of Warlock, when she stopped suddenly, this time without turning her back to the wind, and Cosmo was immediately beside her.

"What's yon, Cosmo?" she said—and Cosmo fancied consternation in the tone. He looked sharply forward, and saw what seemed a glimmer, but might be only something whiter in the whiteness. No! it was certainly a light—but whether on the road he could not tell. There was no house in that direction! It moved!—yet not as if carried in human hand! Now it was gone! There it was again! There were two of them—two huge pale eyes, rolling from side to side. Grannie's warning about the Prince of the power of the air, darted into Cosmo's mind. It was awful! But anyhow the devil was not to be run from! That was the easiest measure, no doubt, yet not the less the one impossible to take. And now it was plain that the something was not away on the moor, but on the road in front of them, and coming towards them. It came nearer and nearer, and grew vaguely visible—a huge blundering mass—animal or what, they could not tell, but on the wind came sounds that might be human—or animal human—the sounds of encouragement and incitation to horses. And now it approached no more. With common impulse they hastened towards it.

It was a travelling carriage—a rare sight in those parts at any time, and rarer still in winter. Both of them had certainly seen one before, but as certainly, never a pair of lighted carriage-lamps, with reflectors to make of them fiendish eyes. It had but two horses, and, do what the driver could, which

was not much, they persisted in standing stock-still, refusing to take a single step farther. Indeed they could not. They had tried and tried, and done their best, but finding themselves unable to move the carriage an inch, preferred standing still to spending themselves in vain struggles, for all their eight legs went slipping about under them.

Cosmo looked up to the box. The driver was little more than a boy, and nearly dead with cold. Already Aggie had a forefoot of the near horse in her hand. Cosmo ran to the other.

"Their feet's fu' o' snaw," said Aggie.

"Ay; it's ba'd hard," said Cosmo. "They maun hae come ower a saft place: it wadna ba' the nicht upo' the muir."

"Hae ye yer knife, Cosmo?" asked Aggie.

Here a head was put out of the carriage-window. It was that of a lady in a swansdown travelling-hood. She had heard an unintelligible conversation—and one intelligible word. They must be robbers! How else should they want a knife in a snowstorm? Why else should they have stopped the carriage? She gave a little cry of alarm. Aggie dropped the hoof she held, and went to the window.

"What's yer wull, mem?" she asked.

"What's the matter?" the lady returned in a trembling voice, but not a little reassured at the sight, as she crossed the range of one of the lamps, of the face of a young girl. "Why doesn't the coachman go on?"

"He canna, mem. The horse canna win throu the snaw. They hae ba's o' 't i' their feet, an' they canna get a grip wi' them, nae mair nor ye cud yersel', mem, gien the soles o' yer shune war roon' an' made o'ice. But we'll sune set that richt.—Hoo far hae ye come, mem, gien I may speir? Aigh, mem, its an unco nicht!"

The lady did not understand much of what Aggie said, for she was English, returning from her first visit to Scotland, but, half guessing at her question, replied, that they had come from Cairntod, and were going on to Howglen. She told her also, now entirely reassured by Aggie's voice, that they had been much longer on the way than they had expected, and were now getting anxious.

"I doobt sair gien ye'll win to Howglen the nicht," said Aggie.—"But ye're not yer lone?" she added, trying to summon her English, of which she had plenty of a sort, though not always at hand.

"My father is with me," said the lady, looking back into the dark carriage, "but I think he is asleep, and I don't want to wake him while we are standing still."

Peeping in, Aggie caught sight of somebody muffled, leaning back in the other corner of the carriage, and breathing heavily.

To Aggie's not altogether unaccustomed eye, it seemed he might have had more than was good for him in the way of refreshment.

Cosmo was busy clearing the snow from the horses' hoofs. The driver, stupid or dazed, sat on the box, helpless as a parrot on a swinging perch.

"You'll never win to Howglen to-night, mem," said Aggie.

"We must put up where we can, then," answered the lady.

"I dinna know of a place nearer, fit for gentlefowk, mem." "What are we to do then?" asked the lady, with subdued, but evident anxiety.

"What's the guid o' haein' a father like that—sleepin' and snorin' whan maist ye're in want o' 'im!" thought Aggie to herself; but what she replied was, "Bide, mem, till we hear what Cosmo has to say til't."

"That is a peculiar name!" remarked the lady, brightening at the sound of it, for it could, she thought, hardly belong to a peasant.

"It's the name the lairds o' Glenwarlock hae borne for generations," answered Aggie; "though doobtless it's no a name, as the maister wad say, indigenous to the country. Ane o' them brought it frae Italy, the place whaur the Pop' o' Rom' bides."

"And who is this Cosmo whose advice you would have me ask?"

"He's the yoong laird himsel', mem:—eh! but ye maun be a stranger no to ken the name o' Warlock."

"Indeed I am a stranger—and I can't help wishing, if there is much more of this weather between us and England, that I had been more of a stranger still."

"Deed, mem, we hae a heap o' weather up here as like this as ae snow-flake is til anither. But we tak what's sent, an' makna mony remarks. Though to be sure the thing's different whan it's o' a body's ain seekin'."

This speech—my reader may naturally think it not over-polite—was happily not over-intelligible to the lady. Aggie, a little wounded by the reflection on the weather of her country, had in her emotion aggravated her Scottish tone.

"And where is this Cosmo? How are we to find him?"

"He'll come onsought, mem. It's only 'at he's busy cleanin' oot yer puir horse' hivs 'at hedisna p'y his respec's to ye. But he'll be blythe eneuch!"

"I thought you said he was a lord!" remarked the lady.

"Na, I saidna that, mem. He's nae lord. But he's a laird, an' some lairds is better nor 'maist ony lords—an' HE'S Warlock o' Glenwarlock—at least he wull be—an' may it be lang or come the day."

Hard as the snow was packed in them, all the eight hoofs were now cleared out with Cosmo's busy knife, which he had had to use carefully lest he should hurt the frog. The next moment his head appeared, a little behind that of Aggie, and in the light of the lamp the lady saw the handsome face of a lad seemingly about sixteen.

"Here he is, mem! This is the yoong laird. Ye speir at HIM what ye're to du, and du jist as he tells ye," said Aggie, and drew back, that Cosmo might take her place.

"Is that girl your sister?" asked the lady, with not a little abruptness, for the *best bred* are not always the most polite.

"No, my lady," answered Cosmo, who had learned from the lad on the box her name and rank; "she is the daughter of one of my father's tenants."

Lady Joan Scudamore thought it very odd that the youth should be on such familiar terms with the daughter of one of his father's tenants—out alone with her in the heart of a hideous storm! No doubt the girl looked up to him, but apparently from the same level, as one sharing in the pride of the family! Should she take her advice, and seek his? or should she press on for Howglen? There was, alas! no counsel to be had from her father just at present: if she woke him, he would but mutter something not so much unlike an oath as it ought to be, and go to sleep again!

"We want very much to reach Howglen—I think that is what you call the place," she said.

"You can't get there to-night, I'm afraid," returned Cosmo. "The road is, as you see, no road at all. The horses would do better if you took their shoes off, I think—only then, if they came on a bit of frozen dub, it might knock their hoofs to pieces in, such a frost."

The lady glanced round at her sleeping companion with a look expressive of no small perplexity.

"My father will make you welcome, my lady," continued Cosmo, "if you will come with us. We can give you only what English people must think poor fare, for we're not—"

She interrupted him.

"I should be glad to sit anywhere all night, where there was a fire. I am nearly frozen."

"We can do a little better for you than that, though not so well as we should like. Perhaps, as we can't make any show, we are the more likely to do our best for your comfort."

Their pinched circumstances had at one time and another given rise to conversation in which the laird and his son sought together to sound the abysses of hospitality: the old-fashioned sententiousness of the boy had in it nothing of the prig.

"You are very kind. I will promise to be comfortable," said the lady.

She began to be a trifle interested in this odd specimen of the Scotch calf.

"Welcome then to Glenwarlock!" said Cosmo. "Come, Aggie; tak ane o' them by the heid: they're gaein' wi' 's.—We must turn the horses' heads, my lady. I fear they won't like to face the wind they've only had their backs to yet. I can't make out whether your driver is half dead or half drunk or more than half frozen; but Aggie and I will take care of them, and if he tumble off, nobody will be the worse."

"What a terrible country!" said the lady to herself. "The coachmen get drunk! the boys are prigs! there is no distinction between the owners of the soil and the tenants who farm it! and it snows from morning to night, and from one week's end to another!"

Aggie had taken the head of the near horse, and Cosmo took that of the off one. Their driver said nothing, letting them do as they pleased. With some difficulty, for they had to be more than ordinarily cautious, the road being indistinguishable from the ditches they knew here bounded it on both sides, they got the carriage round. But when the weary animals received the tempest in their faces, instead of pulling they backed, would have turned again, and for some time were not to be induced to front it. Agnes and Cosmo had to employ all their powers of persuasion, first to get them to stand still, and then to advance a little. Gradually, by leading, and patting, and continuous encouraging in language they understood, they were coaxed as far as the parish road, and there turning their sides to the wind, and no longer their eyes and noses, they began to move with a little will of their own; for horses have so much hope, that the mere fact of having made a turn is enough to revive them with the expectation of cover and food and repose. They reached presently a more sheltered part of the road, and if now and then they had to drag the carriage through deeper snow, they were no longer buffeted by the cruel wind or stung by its frost-arrows.

All this time the gentleman inside slept—nor was it surprising; for, lunching at the last town, and not finding the wine fit to drink, he had fallen back upon an accomplishment of his youth, and betaken himself to toddy. That he had found that at least fit to drink was proved by the state in which he was now carried along.

They reached at last the steep ascent from the parish road to Castle Warlock. The two conductors, though they had no leisure to confer on the subject, were equally anxious as to whether the horses would face it; but the moment their heads came round, whether only that it was another turn with its fresh hope, or that the wind brought some stray odour of hay or oats to their wide nostrils, I cannot tell, but finding the ground tolerably clear, they took to it with a will, and tore up with the last efforts of all but exhausted strength, Cosmo and Aggie running along beside them, and talking to them all the way. The only difficulty was to get the lad on the box to give them their heads.



## CHAPTER XIV. THE CASTLE INN

The noise of their approach, heard from the bottom of the ascent, within the lonely winter castle, awoke profound conjecture, and Grizzie proceeded to light the lantern that she might learn the sooner what catastrophe could cause such a phenomenon: something awful must have taken place! Perhaps they had cut off the king's head as they did in France! But such was the rapidity of the horses' ascent in the hope of rest, and warmth, and supper, that the carriage was in the close, and rattling up to the door, ere she had got the long wick of the tallow candle to acknowledge the dominion of fire. The laird rose in haste from his arm-chair, and went to the door. There stood the chaise, in the cloud of steam that rose from the quick-heaving sides of the horses. And there were Cosmo and Agnes at the door of it, assisting somebody to descend. The laird was never in a hurry. He was too thorough a gentleman to trouble approach by uneasy advance, and he had no fear of anything Cosmo had done. He stood therefore in the kitchen door, calmly expectant.

A long-cloaked lady got down, and, turning from the assistant hand of his son, came towards him—a handsome lady, tall and somewhat stately, but weary, and probably in want of food as well as rest. He bowed with old-fashioned worship, and held out his hand to welcome her. She gave him hers graciously, and thanked him for the hospitality his son had offered them.

"Come in, come in, madam," said the old man. "The fireside is the best place for explanations. Welcome to a poor house but a warm hearth! So much we can yet offer stranger-friends."

He led the way, and she followed him into the kitchen. On a small piece of carpet before the fire, stood the two chairs of state, each protected by a large antique screen. From hers the grandmother rose with dignified difficulty, when she perceived the quality of the entering stranger.

"Mother," said the laird, "it is not often we have the pleasure of visitors at this time of the year!"

"The more is the rare foot welcome," answered she, and made Lady Joan as low a courtesy as she dared: she could not quite reckon on her power of recovery.

Lady Joan returned her salute, little impressed with the honour done her, but recognizing that she was in the presence of a gentlewoman. She took the laird's seat at his invitation, and, leaning forward, gazed wearily at the fire.

The next moment, a not very pleasant-looking old man entered, supported on one side by Cosmo and on the other by Agnes. They had had no little difficulty in waking him up, and he entered vaguely supposing they had arrived at an inn where they were to spend the night. If his grumbling and swearing as he advanced was *SOTTO VOCE*, the assuagement was owing merely to his not being sufficiently awake to use more vigour. The laird left the lady and advanced to meet him, but he took no notice of him, regarding his welcome as the obsequiousness of a landlord, and turned shivering towards the fire, where Grizzie was hastening to set him a chair.

"The fire's the best flooer i' the gairden, an' the pig's the best coo i' the herdin', my lord," she said—an old saw to which his lordship might have been readier to respond, had he remembered that the *PIG* sometimes meant the stone jar that held the whisky.

As soon as Lord Mergwain was seated, Cosmo drew his father aside, told him the names of their guests, and in what difficulty he had found them, and added that the lady and the horses were sober enough, but for the other two he would not answer.

"We have been spending some weeks at Canmore Castle in Ross-shire, and are now on our way home," said Lady Joan to Mistress Warlock.

"You have come a long way round," remarked the old lady, not so pleased with the manners of her male visitor, on whom she kept casting, every now and then, a full glance.

"We have," replied Lady Joan. "We turned out of our way to visit an old friend of papa's, and have been storm-bound till he—I mean papa—could bear it no longer. We sent our servants on this morning. They are, I hope, by this time, waiting us at Howglen."

The fire had been thawing the sleep out of Lord Mergwain, and now at length he was sufficiently awake to be annoyed that his daughter should hold so much converse with the folk of the inn.

"Can't you show us to a room?" he said gruffly, "and get us something to eat?"

"We are doing the best we can for your lordship," replied the laird. "But we were not expecting visitors, and one of the rooms you will have to occupy, has not been in use for some time. In such weather as this, it will take two or three hours of a good fire to render it fit to sleep in. But I will go myself, and see that the servant is making what haste she can."

He put on his hat over his night-cap, and made for the door.

"That's right, landlord," cried his lordship; "always see to the comfort of your guests yourself—But bless me! you don't mean we have to go out of doors to reach our bedrooms?"

"I am afraid we cannot help it," returned the laird, arresting his step. "There used to be a passage connecting the two houses, but for some reason or other—I never heard what—it was closed in my father's time."

"He must have been an old fool!" remarked the visitor.

"My lord!"

"I said your father must have been an old fool," repeated his lordship testily.

"You speak of my husband!" said Mistress Warlock, drawing herself up with dignity.

"I can't help that. *I* didn't give you away. Let's have some supper, will you? I want a tumbler of toddy, and without something to eat it might make me drunk."

Lady Joan sat silent, with a look half of contempt, half of mischievous enjoyment on her handsome face. She had too often to suffer from her father's rudeness not to enjoy its bringing him into a scrape. But the laird was sharper than she thought him, and seeing both the old man's condition and his mistake, humoured the joke. His mother rose, trembling with indignation. He gave her his arm, and conducted her to a stair which ascended immediately from the kitchen, whispering to her on the way, that the man was the worse of drink, and he must not quarrel with him. She retired without leave-taking. He then called Cosmo and Agnes, who were talking together in a low voice at the other end of the kitchen, and taking them to Grizzie in the spare room, told them to help her, that she might the sooner come and get the supper ready.

"I am afraid, my lord," he said, returning, "we are but poorly provided for such guests as your lordship, but we will do what we can."

"A horrible country!" growled his lordship; "but look you, I don't want jaw—I want drink."

"What drink would your lordship have? If it be in my power—"

"I doubt, for all your talk, if you've got anything but your miserable whisky!" interrupted Lord Mergwain.

Now the laird had some remnants of old wine in the once well stored cellar, and, thankless as his visitor seemed likely to turn out, his hospitality would not allow him to withhold what he had.

"I have a few bottles of claret," he said, "—if it should not be over-old!—I do not understand much about wine myself."

"Let's have it up," cried his lordship. "We'll see. If you don't know good wine, I do. I'm old enough for any wine."

The laird would have had more confidence in recommending his port, which he had been told was as fine as any in Scotland, but he thought claret safer for one in his lordship's condition—one who having drunk would drink again. He went therefore to the wine cellar, which had once been the dungeon of the castle, and brought thence a most respectable-looking magnum, dirty as a burrowing terrier, and to the eye of the imagination hoary with age. The eyes of the toper glistened at the sight. Eagerly he stretched out both hands towards it. They actually trembled with desire. Hardly could he

endure the delay of its uncorking. No sooner did the fine promissory note of the discharge of its tompion reach his ear, than he cried out, with the authority of a field-officer at least:

"Decant it. Leave the last glass in the bottom."

The laird filled a decanter, and set it before him.

"Haven't you a mangum-jug?"

"No, my lord."

"Then fill another decanter, and mind the last glass."

"I have not another decanter, my lord."

"Not got two decanters, you fool?" sneered his lordship, enraged at not having the whole bottle set down to him at once. "But after all," he resumed, "it mayn't be worth a rush, not to say a decanter. Bring the bottle. Set it down. Here!—Carefully! Bring a glass. You should have brought the glasses first. Bring three; I like to change my glass. Make haste, will you!"

The laird did make haste, smiling at the exigence of his visitor. Lord Mergwain listened to the glug-glug in the long neck of the decanter as if it had been a song of love, and the moment it was over, was holding the glass to his nose.

"Humph! Not much aroma here!" he growled, "I ought to have made the old fool"—the laird must have been some fifteen years younger than he.—"set it down before the fire—only what would have become of me while it was thawing? It's no wonder though! By the time I've been buried as long, I shall want thawing too!"

The wine, however, turned out more satisfactory to the palate of the toper than to his nostrils—which in truth, so much had he drunk that day, were at present incapable of doing it justice—and he set himself to enjoy it. How that should be possible to a man for whom the accompanying dried olives of memory could do so little, I find it difficult to understand. One would think, to enjoy his wine alone, a man must have either good memories or good hopes: Lord Mergwain had forgotten the taste of hope; and most men would shrink from touching the spring that would set a single scene of such a panorama unrolling itself, as made up the past of Lord Mergwain. However there he sat, and there he drank, and, truth to tell, now and then smiled grimly.

The laird set a pair of brass candlesticks on the table—there were no silver utensils any more in the house of Glenwarlock; years ago the last of them had vanished—and retired to a wooden chair at the end of the hearth, under the lamp that hung on the wall. But on his way he had taken from a shelf an old, much-thumbed folio which Mr. Simon had lent him—the journal of George Fox, and the panorama which then for a while kept passing before his mind's eye, was not a little different from that passing before Lord Mergwain's. What a study to a spirit able to watch the unrolling of the two side by side!

In a few minutes Grizzie entered, carrying a fowl newly killed, its head almost touching the ground at the end of its long, limp neck. She seated herself on a stool, somewhere about the middle of the large space, and proceeded to pluck, and otherwise prepare it for the fire. Having, last of all, split it open from end to end, turning it into something like an illegible heraldic crest, she approached the fire, the fowl in one hand, the gridiron in the other.

"I doobt I maun get his lordship to sit a wee back frae the fire," she said. "I maun jist bran'er this chuckie for his supper."

Lady Joan had taken Mrs. Warlock's chair, and her father had taken the laird's, and pulled it right in front of the fire, where a small deal table supported his bottle, his decanter, and his three glasses.

"What does the woman mean?" said his lordship. "—Oh! I see; a spread-eagle!—But is my room not ready yet? Or haven't you one to sit in? I don't relish feasting my nose so much in advance of my other senses."

"Ow! nae fear o' yer lordship's nose,'cep' it be frae yer lordship's hose, my lord!" said Grizzie, "for I doobt ye're birstlin' yer lordship's shins! I'll tak the cratur oot to the cairt-shed, an' sing' 't there

first. But 'deed I wadna advise ye to gang to yer room a minute afore ye need, for it winna be that warm the nicht. I hae made a fire 'at's baith big an' bricht, an' fit to ro'st Belzebub—an' I beg your pardon, laird—but it's some days—I micht say ooks—sin' there was a fire intil 't, an' the place needs time to tak the heat intil its auld neuks."

She might have said years not a few, instead of some weeks, but her truthfulness did not drive her so far. She turned, and left the house, carrying with her the fowl to singe.

"Here," said his lordship to his host, "move back this table and chair a bit, will you? I don't relish having the old witch fussing about my knees. What a mistake it is not to have rooms ready for whoever may come!"

The laird rose, laid his book down, and moved the table, then helped his guest to rise, moved his chair, and placed the screen again betwixt him and the door. Lord Mergwain re-settled himself to his bottle.

In the meantime, in the guest-chamber, which had for so long entertained neither friend nor stranger, Cosmo and Aggie were busy—too busy to talk much—airing the linen, dusting the furniture, setting things tidy, and keeping up a roaring fire. For this purpose the remnants of an old broken-down cart, of which the axle was anciently greasy, had been fetched from the winter-store, and the wood and peats together, with a shovelful of coal to give the composition a little body, had made a glorious glow. But the heat had hardly yet begun to affect sensibly the general atmosphere of the place. It was a large room, the same size as the drawing-room immediately under it, and still less familiar to Cosmo. For, if the latter filled him with a kind of loving awe, the former caused him a kind of faint terror, so that, in truth, even in broad daylight, at no time was he willing to enter it. Now and then he would open the door in passing, and for a moment stand peering in, with a stricken, breath-bating enjoyment of the vague atmosphere of dread, which, issuing, seemed to envelope him in its folds; but to go in was too much, and he neither desired nor endured even the looking in for more than a few seconds. For so long it was to him like a page in a book of horrors: to go to the other end of it, and in particular to approach the heavily curtained bed, was more than he cared to do without cogent reason. At the same time he rejoiced to think there was such a room in the house, and attached to it an idea of measureless value—almost as if it had a mysterious window that looked out upon the infinite. The cause of this feeling was not to himself traceable. Until old Grannie's story, he had heard no tale concerning it that he remembered: he may have heard hints—a word dropped may have made its impression, and roused fancies outlasting the memory of their origin; for feelings, like memories of scents and sounds, remain, when the related facts have vanished. What it was about the room that scared him, he could not tell, but the scare was there. With a companion like Aggie, however, even after hearing Grannie's terrible reminiscence, he was able to be in the room without experiencing worse than that same milder, almost pleasant degree of dread, caused by the mere looking through the door into the strange brooding silence of the place. But, I must confess, this applies only to the space on the side of the bed next the fire. The bed itself—not to mention the shadowy region beyond it—on which the body of the pirate had lain, he could not regard without a sense of the awfully gruesome: itself looked scared at its own consciousness of the fact, and of the feeling it caused in the beholder.

In the strength of Aggie's presence, he was now able to take a survey of the room such as never before. Over walls, floor, and ceiling, his eyes were wandering, when suddenly a question arose on which he desired certainty: "Is there," he said to himself, "a door upo' the ither side o' the bed?"

"Did Grannie mak mention o' sic a door?" he asked himself next, and could not be certain of the answer. He gazed around him, and saw no door other than that by which they had entered, but at the head of the bed, on the other side, was a space hidden by the curtain: it might be there! When they went to put the sheets on the bed, he would learn! He dared not go till then! "Dare not!" he repeated to himself—and went at once.

He saw and trembled. It was the strangest feeling. If it was not fear, it was something very like it, but with a mixture of wondrous pleasure: there was the door! The curtains hid Aggie, and for a

moment he felt as if he were miles alone, and must rush back to the refuge of her presence. But he would not yield to the folly—compelled himself to walk to the door.

Whether he was more disappointed or relieved, he could not, the first instant, have told: instead of a door, scarcely leaning against the wall, was an old dark screen, in stamped leather, from which the gilding was long faded. Disappointment and not relief was then his only sense.

"Aggie," he called, still on the farther side of the bed—he called gently, but trembled at the sound of his own voice—"did ye ever hear—did Grannie mak mention o' a door 'at the auld captain gaed oot at?"

"Whisht, whisht!" cried Aggie, in a loud hissing whisper, which seemed to pierce the marrow of Cosmo's bones, "I rede ye say nae thing aboot that i' this chaumer. Bide till we're oot o' 't: I hae near dune. Syne we'll steek the door, an' lat the fire work. It'll hae eneuch adu afore it mak the place warm; the cauld intil this room's no a coamon ane. There's something by ord'nar intil 't."

Cosmo could no longer endure having the great, old, hearse-like bed between him and Aggie. With a shiver in the very middle of his body, he hastened to the other side: there lay the country of air, and fire, and safe earthly homeliness: the side he left was the dank region of the unknown, whose march-ditch was the grave.

They hurried with the rest of their work. Aggie insisted on being at the farther side of the bed when they made it. Not another word was spoken between them, till they were safe from the room, and had closed its door behind them.

They went up to Cosmo's room, to make it something fitter for a lady's bower. Opening a certain chest, they took from it—stored there by his mother, Cosmo loved to think—another set of curtains, clean blankets, fine sheets, and a counterpane of silk patchwork, and put them all on the bed. With these, a white toilet-cover, and a chair or two from the drawing-room, they so changed the room that Cosmo declared he would not have known it. They then filled the grate with as much fuel as it would hold, and running fast down the two stairs, went again to the kitchen. At the door of it, however, Aggie gave her companion the slip, and set out to go back to her grannie at Muir o' Warlock.

Cosmo found the table spread for supper, the English lord sitting with his wine before him, and the lady in his grandmother's chair, leaning back, and yawning wearily. Lord Mergwain looked muddled, and his daughter cast on him now and then a look that had in it more of annoyance than affection. He was not now a very pleasant lord to look on, whatever he might once have been. He was red-faced and bleary-eyed, and his nose, partly from the snuff which he took in large quantity, was much injured in shape and colour: a closer description the historical muse declines. His eyes had once been blue, but tobacco, potations, revellings day and night—everything but tears, had washed from them almost all the colour. It added much to the strange unpleasantness of his appearance, that he wore a jet-black wig, so that to the unnatural came the untimely, and enhanced the withered. His mouth, which was full of false teeth, very white, and ill-fitting, had a cruel expression, and Death seemed to look out every time he grinned.

As soon as he and Lady Joan were seated at the supper-table, with Grizzie to wait upon them, the laird and Cosmo left the kitchen, and went to the spare-room, for the laird judged that, in the temper and mistake her father was in, the lady would be more comfortable in their absence.

"Cosmo," he said, standing with his back to the fire, when he had again made it up, "I cannot help feeling as if I had known that man before. But I can recall no circumstances, and it may be a mere fancy. YOU have never seen him before, my boy, have you?"

"I don't think I have, papa; and I don't care if I never see him again," answered Cosmo. "The lady is pretty, but not very pleasant, I think, though she is a lord's daughter."

"Ah, but such a lord, Cosmo!" returned his father. "When a man goes on drinking like that, he is no better than a cheese under the spigot of a wine-cask; he lives to keep his body well soaked—that it may be the nicer, or the nastier for the worms. Cosmo, my son, don't you learn to drown your soul in your body, like the poor Duke of Clarence in the wine-butt."

The material part of us ought to keep growing gradually thinner, to let the soul out when its time comes, and the soul to keep growing bigger and stronger every day, until it bursts the body at length, as a growing nut does its shell; when, instead, the body grows thicker and thicker, lessening the room within, it squeezes the life out of the soul, and when such a man's body dies, his soul is found a shrivelled thing, too poor to be a comfort to itself or to anybody else. Cosmo, to see that man drink, makes me ashamed of my tumbler of toddy. And now I think of it, I don't believe it does me any good; and, just to make sure that I am in earnest, from this hour I will take no more.—"Then," he added, after a short pause, "I shall be pretty sure you will not take it."

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