farmer looked at his wife with wistful tenderness. There needed no spae-craft to predict the probability of a welcome visitant, nature had told him that; but the emphasis put on the gear vexed him.

"It's the old story, Bell,' he said, putting his arm round her waist kindly, and smoothing her hair. "Some guid we hinna got that's coming. Oh lass, lass, we're gey happy for the present, but dinna put foret the nock as I ance asked leave to do, and try to force what's hidden from us. The wish to possess ither folk's gear has wrocht muckle ill. Thrift and work will bring a' worldly things we need, and happiness alang wi' them. Now," he said, holding her at arm's length and looking lovingly into the soft eyes that were ready to overflow with tears, "I'll put in the powny while you set the tea, and after that I'll tell ye a' aboot Mr. Congalton's marriage."

CHAPTER XXVI

CONCLUSION

It was late on a golden afternoon in the second month of autumn, a year after the events of last chapter, when Isaac Kilgour passed his brother-in-law on the road without recognition and climbed the hill slowly towards the kirkyard. He had a small basket in his hand filled with fresh-cut flowers. The gate to the sacred enclosure was massive and heavy. It had recently been donated to the parish by the laird of Templemains on the occasion of his being made an elder. It was curiously wrought and fashioned between two substantial pillars, and bore several suitable scriptural quotations amongst the fret-work of its design, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," "Dead yet speaketh," "Whoso believeth on Me shall

never die," might be read with comfort by the spiritually minded, though to the sorrowing unbelievers, if such there were in the parish, these familiar texts could but add mockery to their grief. Isaac laid down his little basket, for it required both hands and all his strength to operate against the powerful spring intended to resist bovine curiosity and intrusion. The sacred acre was enclosed by a wall which on three sides rose but a few feet above the level of the graves. In the central space stood fragments of the old church with one gable and a window intact. Slabs of marble around the remaining walls referred in terms of affection to early pastors whose labours were closed. At the gable-end, a modern granite monument, with heavy protecting chains looping it to suitable corner pieces, testified that it was erected by a loving people to the memory of the Rev. Dr. Someril, "the sainted pastor of the parish." The mossy sward all around was ribbed with graves. Stones and slabs of varying sizes, facing promiscuous ways, and standing in various degrees of erectness, were scattered over the place, bearing local names — many of them frequently

written in this Chronicle. Isaac stepped slowly and reverently over the mossy mounds. The spot he came to visit was not seen from the entrance-gate, having its situation off the west side of the chapel wall. It was the sweetest little space in the whole enclosure, level, turfed with evergreen grass and closely shaven. This soft, cool, well made bed, was strewn with flowers tenderly laid there the day before, and now again the reticent attendant had come to perform the daily ministrations of "happing his bairn" with flowers. At the head of this plot there was an Ionic cross, delicately worked in white marble, and set in thin graduated blocks of red granite. The inscription carved on the marble was simple — "Eva Congalton aged 8." Then followed the words worked into the circle round the cross. "Bless Thy little Lamb to-night." Isaac gathered up the discarded blooms and put down the fresh ones. To him this was a sacred duty like saying his prayers. As he retired a few steps to survey the spot, his eye instinctively travelled from the grave to the cross. "Her ain words, puir lammie, as she lay doon weariet to her last

sleep." The gardener loved the stimulating influence of a pipe when in a thoughtful mood, but he would not smoke in the neighbourhood of this grave; he however sat down on the kirkyard wall to think. The master and Miss Hetty (it was them he was thinking of then) were now happily married, and settled in London, but they had left him and Janet "in chairge o' the bairn." He was thinking also in his own unlettered way that a well-developed sense is sometimes more helpful than genius. Hetty had written about her cousin Willie who was at last making his fortune in a tea and coffee plantation in India, not by mental gifts, but by the accidental discovery of an abnormal power of smell and taste. Miss Hazlet was married to the parish minister of Kilbaan, and her parents by her husband's desire returned to close the evening of their days at the old manse. The pension to Isaac and his wife had been indubitably secured to them. He could make more than his rent out of the manse garden by a few days' work in spring, so that there was no call to go afield, and certainly no employment would be accepted

that interfered with his daily care of this little grave. Sitting there looking out over the village he was reminiscently happy. A column of blue smoke swayed on the still air above the smithy. A horse neighed at the door, and the hammer rang inside on the anvil. Several men sat apart on the parapet of the bridge and smoked. Tinny Walker (he was known by his size) had his shoulder close to the candle-maker's elbow, while the latter leant over his own half door with his hands clasped before him contemplating the wall of the smith's garden. Isaac's eye travelled up the village street between the colouring hedges towards Broomfields. It was the spot in all the landscape most pregnant with memories to him. William Caughie came out of his door to join the carrier as he passed leisurely down the brae, but to Isaac they were not consciously in the scene. His thought had the scope of many years and many recollections, embracing humour, sentiment of a kind, and tragedy, but in and out amongst the warp and woof of his musings there appeared the sweet sympathetic face of an unselfish woman, and the thoughtful

prattle of an eager questioning child. The sun was more than half under the peak of the Baidlands, but it splintered a lance in the Holm woods below Kirdy's cairn, amongst foliage that gleamed with the pathetic beauty of decay. Nearer, the river stole beneath, mostly in shadow; at times its course was deep and slumbrous; anon leaving a pebbly strand on one side; it would swing brokenly under the shoulder of a protecting bank, caper for a space among the grey boulders, then thread the eye of the distant bridge, and disappear at last among the bent covered dunes. While Isaac sat a dog-cart rattled round the corner of the merchant's house, and caught his eye. He recognized it as belonging to Coultarmains. The appearance of this dog-cart had evidently provided him with a fresh train of thought, for he turned his head and his eye rested on the brown mound of a newly-made grave. Almost simultaneously the heavy gate was pushed gently open, and a youthful matron, dressed in black, stepped timidly over the intervening spaces towards the spot on which Isaac's eye rested, and, stooping reverently, she placed a

wreath of fresh flowers on her mother's grave. Poor Bell — and yet, why poor? Two months before the little guest, which Nan Pinkerton had foreseen hastening to her from the "lift," had come and nestled cosily in her bosom. Was she indeed an angel paying the youthful couple only a passing visit? At present she was daintily human, but whether she was to develop wings and use them need not trouble the reader of these closing lines; as yet the wings were not even in bud. The small assertive mite of a guest had come to count in the census returns, while the active, masterful, well-intentioned, but not over-prudent grandmother had passed humbly within the kirkyard wall, without knowledge of the advent. Bell whispered her mother's name. If she could but know — oh, if she could see and apprehend the joy which the priceless treasure had brought into their home, she would forget all her disappointments. If she had been worldly, if she had been ambitious, Bell felt it had all been for her own sake. Now, when the truest and purest happiness that earth could give had been attained, she could only whisper her gratitude

to the inanimate earth. Isaac considerately took his departure unseen, while these regretful reflections were passing through Bell's mind. By and by she left the new-made grave. There are friendly visits to pay even in a kirkyard, especially here, where grave was linked to grave by friendly or neighbourly association. The grave of the grim but kindly old humourist whose last testament had bred such trouble was naturally suggested to Bell's mind by this visit to her mother's grave. From Dr. Congalton's place of sepulture it was but a few steps over the mossy grass to the small enclosure with the marble cross. This dainty spot, bright with the fresh flowers, had a tenderer interest to Bell now that she had a grave and a child of her own. She thought of the bright face and the clever English tongue, now, like the others, at rest beneath. Had her mother's wishes been fulfilled she might have been a mother to her — A mother? Bell wondered if that could have been possible now that she realized the intense love and self-forgetful tenderness she felt for her own child. Her reverie was broken by the sound of a voice at

her side. On looking round she recognized the postman.

"I saw ye frae the road," he said, "and jumpit the wa'; it'll save me a walk to the Mains." The letter he gave her was addressed to herself, and bore the London postmark. Bell was nervously curious, and broke the seal where she stood. The writing was in an unfamiliar hand, and evidently difficult to read, but she spelled through it with her lips parted. Her face flushed and her eyes sparkled as she caught its purport. With the open letter in her hand, she ran with forgetful gladness to the grave on which her flower wreath lay.

"Mother — mother —" she whispered in suppressed intensity of joy, "all has come right at last — at last:" then frightened at the sound of her own voice and the odd eeriness of the situation, she hastened back to the road where the boy was waiting with the dog-cart, and drove quickly away.

When she arrived at Coultarmains, her husband was at the top of a ladder putting an armful of fresh thatch on one of the numerous stacks of oats with which the farmhouse was flanked

on three sides, while her father, who had just returned from a neighbouring market, stood below shouting up the current prices of such agricultural stuffs as they were mutually interested in. Bell's heart beat fast, and her limbs trembled with excitement as she ran forward to salute her father.

"Come doon, Will," she cried, "and come in baith, for I have great news to tell ye." She hurried off, and when the men reached the house the young mother was on her knees, with head buried out of sight in the cradle, talking in broken language to a red wry-faced pigmy, into whose unwilling ear she was endeavouring to convey the idea that she would be a "michty leddy" yet.

"What's this great news, Bell?" inquired her husband.

"Read that," she said proudly, handing the letter to Will. Then addressing her father — "Mr. Congalton has made owre his daughter's share o' the doctor's legacy to oor bairn."

"I thocht we had dune wi' that job," said Windy-yett shortly. "Whare got ye the letter?"

"From the post lad." Then she lowered her

voice; "it was put into my hand *within sicht o' the three graves!*"

The young farmer read the letter gravely, and went back on certain portions of it, while Bell followed his eyes, and tried to read the frank but serious face. She remembered certain conversations that had taken place since their marriage regarding Dr. Congalton's money, and the decided opinions he had held regarding it; but while she endorsed his sentiments then, it was now too apparent that the influence of heredity was not wholly eradicated.

"Well," she inquired timidly, almost fearing what he might say.

"It's a very kind and generous letter," he replied slowly, "but as your father says I thocht we had dune wi' this job. The doctor's siller has brocht ill-luck and trouble enough already. I'm real — real sorry to see you so built up in it, Bell, for I thocht we had come to an understanding aboot it lang syne."

"But it's a gift," she argued, "no a legacy. Besides —" (the tears were coming), "can we refuse if it's a gift to the bairn?"

"There may be ither bairns," he said gently;

"if that be sae let them a' be alike to us, we'll gie them what we can afford, and teach them sic notions as becomes their station. I'm sure you're far owre wise a lass to wish that this wee thing because o' the siller should grow up to look doon on the lave."

Bell gazed helplessly at her father.

"Willie's richt," he said, "no good can come to man or woman either by being pitch-forked oot o' their place."

"Bell is a kind and reasonable lass," her husband said, rising and kissing her. "We're richer in ae sense for this generous offer, but I'm sure when we come to talk the matter owre calmly atween oorsel's, Bell will agree wi' me in doing what is richt."

THE END.