

been used. Then he selected from his books Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," and "Coles on the Divine Sovereignty," and on them he laid the large family Bible out of which Flora's name had been blotted. This was the stand on which he sat the lamp in the window, and every night till Flora returned its light shone down the steep path that ascended to her home, like the Divine Love from the open door of our Father's House.

III.

LIKE AS A FATHER.

It was only by physical force and a free use of personalities that the Kildrummie passengers could be entrained at the Junction, and the Drumtochty men were always the last to capitulate.

They watched the main-line train that had brought them from Muirtown disappear in the distance, and then broke into groups to discuss the cattle sale at leisure, while Peter, the factotum of the little Kildrummie branch, drove his way through their midst with offensive pieces of luggage, and abused them by name without respect of persons.

"It's maist aggravatin', Drumsheugh, 'at ye'll stand there girmn' at the prices, as if ye were a puir cottar body that had selt her ae coo, and us twal meenutes late. Man, get intae yer kerridge; he'll no be fat that buys frae you, a'll wager."

"Peter's in an awfu' feery-farry [excitement] the nicht, neeburs," Drumsheugh would respond, after a long pause; "ye wud think he wes a mail gaird tae hear him speak. Mind ye, a'm no gain' tae shove ahint if the engine sticks, for I hae na time. He needs a bit nip,"

and Drumsheugh settles himself in his seat, "or else there would be nae leevin' wi' him."

Peter escaped this winged shaft, for he had detected a woman in the remote darkness.

"Keep's a', wumman, what are ye stravagin' about there for out o' a'body's sicht? a' near set aff without ye."

Then Peter recognized her face, and his manner softened of a sudden.

"Come awa', lassie, come awa'; a' didna ken ye at the moment, but a' heard ye hed been veesitin' in the sooth."

"The third is terrible full wi' thae Drumtochty lads, and ye'll hear naething but Drumsheugh's stirks; ye'll maybe be as handy in oor second." And Flora Campbell stepped in unseen.

Between the Junction and Kildrummie Peter was accustomed to wander along the footboard, collecting tickets and identifying passengers. He was generally in fine trim on the way up, and took ample revenge for the insults of the departure. But it was supposed that Peter had taken Drumsheugh's withering sarcasm to heart, for he attached himself to the second that night, and was invisible to the expectant third till the last moment.

"Ye've hed a lang journey, Miss Cammil, and ye maun be nearly dune wi' tire; juist ye sit still till the fook get awa', and the guid wife and me would be prood if ye took a cup o' tea wi's afore ye staired hame. A'll come for ye as sune as a' get the van emptied and ma little trokes feenished."

Peter hurried up to his cottage in such hot haste that his wife came out in great alarm.

"Na, there's naethin' wrang; it's the opposite way this nicht. Ye mind o' Flora Cammil that left her father, and nane o' the Drumtochty fook wud say onything about her. Weel, she's in the train, and a've asked her up tae rest, and she was gled tae come, puir thing. Sae gie her a couthy welcome, wumman, and the best in the hoose, for oors 'ill be the first roof she'll be under on her way hame."

Our women do not kiss one another like the city ladies; but the motherly grip of Mary Bruce's hand sent a thrill to Flora's heart.

"Noo a' ca' this real kind o' ye, Miss Cammil, tae come in without ceremony, and a'd be terrible pleased if ye would dae it ony time yer traivellin'. The rail is by ordinar' fateegin', and a cup o' tea 'ill set ye up," and Mary had Flora in the best chair, and was loading her plate with homely dainties.

Peter would speak of nothing but the new engine that was coming, and was to place the Kildrummie branch beyond ridicule forever, and on this great event he continued without intermission till he parted with Flora on the edge of the pine woods that divided Drumtochty from Kildrummie.

"Guid nicht tae ye, Miss Cammil, and thank ye again for yir veesit. Bring the auld man wi' ye next time ye're passin', though a'm feared ye've been deived [deafened] wi' the engine."

Flora took Peter's hand, that was callous and

rough with the turning of brakes and the coupling of chains.

"It was not your new engine you was thinking about this night, Peter Bruce, but a poor girl that iss in trouble. I hef not the words, but I will be remembering your house; oh, yes! as long as I live."

Twice Peter stood on his way home; the first time he slapped his leg and chuckled:

"Sall, it was gey clever o' me; a hale ker-ridge o' Drumtochty lads, and no ane o' them ever had a glint o' her."

At the second stoppage he drew his hand across his eyes.

"Puir lassie, a' houp her father 'ill be kind tae her, for she's sair broken, and looks liker deith than life."

No one can desire a sweeter walk than through a Scottish pine wood in late September, where you breathe the healing resinous air, and the ground is crisp and springy beneath your feet, and gentle animals dart away on every side, and here and there you come on an open space with a pool and a brake of gorse. Many a time on market days Flora had gone singing through these woods, plucking a posy of wild flowers and finding a mirror in every pool, as young girls will; but now she trembled and was afraid. The rustling of the trees in the darkness, the hooting of an owl, the awful purity of the moonlight in the glades, the cold sheen of the water, were to her troubled conscience omens of judgment. Had it not been for the kindness of Peter Bruce, which was a

pledge of human forgiveness, there would have been no heart in her to dare that wood, and it was with a sob of relief she escaped from the shadow and looked upon the old glen once more, bathed from end to end in the light of the harvest moon. Beneath her ran our little river, spanned by its quaint old bridge; away on the right the Parish Kirk peeped out from a clump of trees; halfway up the glen the clachan lay surrounded by patches of corn; and beyond were the moors, with a shepherd's cottage that held her heart. Two hours ago squares of light told of warmth and welcome within; but now, as Flora passed one house after another, it seemed as if everyone she knew was dead, and she was forgotten in her misery. Her heart grew cold, and she longed to lie down and die, when she caught the gleam of a lighted window. Some one was living still to know she had repented, and she knelt down among the flowers with her ear to the glass to hear the sound of a human voice. Archie Moncur had come home late from a far-away job, but he must needs have worship with his sister before they went to bed, and well did he choose the psalm that night. Flora's tears rained upon the mignonette as the two old people sang:

"When Sion's bondage God turned back,
As men that dreamed were we,
Then filled with laughter was our mouth,
Our tongues with melody,"

while the fragrance of the flowers went up as incense unto God.

All the way along the glen the last words of the psalm still rang in her ears, "Rejoicing shall return," but as she touched the footpath to her home, courage failed her. Marget had written for her dead mother, but no one could speak with authority for her father. She knew the pride of his religion and his iron principles. If he refused her entrance, then it had been better for her to have died in London. A turn of the path brought her within sight of the cottage, and her heart came into her mouth, for the kitchen window was a blaze of light. One moment she feared Lachlan might be ill, but in the next she understood, and in the greatness of her joy she ran the rest of the way. When she reached the door, her strength had departed, and she was not able to knock. But there was no need, for the dogs, who never forget nor cast off, were bidding her welcome with short joyous yelps of delight, and she could hear her father feeling for the latch, which for once could not be found, and saying nothing but "Flora, Flora!"

She had made up some kind of speech, but the only word she ever said was "Father," for Lachlan, who had never even kissed her all the days of her youth, clasped her in his arms and sobbed out blessings over her head, while the dogs licked her hands with their soft, kindly tongues.

"It iss a pity you hef not the Gaelic," Flora said to Marget afterward; "it iss the best of all languages for loving. There are fifty words

for darling, and my father would be calling me every one that night I came home."

Lachlan was so carried with joy, and firelight is so hopeful, that he had not seen the signs of sore sickness on Flora's face, but the morning light undeceived him, and he was sadly dashed.

"You will be fery tired after your long journey, Flora, and it iss good for you to rest. There iss a man in the clachan I am wanting to see, and he will maybe be comin' back with me."

When Lachlan reached his place of prayer, he lay on the ground and cried, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, and spare her for thy servant's sake, and let me not lose her after Thou hast brought her back and hast opened my heart. . . . Take her not till she hass seen that I love her. . . . Give me time to do her kindness for the past wherein I oppressed her. . . . O, turn away Thy judgment on my hardness, and let not the child suffer for her father's sins." Then he arose and hastened for the doctor.

It was afternoon before Dr. MacLure could come, but the very sight of his face, which was as the sun in its strength, let light into the room where Lachlan sat at the bedside holding Flora's hand, and making woeful pretense that she was not ill.

"Weel, Flora, ye've got back frae yir veesits and a' tell ye we've missed ye maist terrible. A' doot thae sooth country fouk haena been feeding ye ower weel, or maybe it was the toon air. It never agrees wi' me. A'm half-

chokit a' the time a'm in Glesgie, and as for London, there's ower mony fouk tae the square yaird for health."

All the time he was busy at his work, and no man could do it better or quicker, although the outside of him was not encouraging.

"Lachlan, what are ye traivellin' in and oot there for with a face that wud sour milk? What ails ye, man? ye're surely no imaginin' Flora's gaein' to leave you?"

"Lord's sake, it's maist provokin' that if a body hes a bit whup o' illness in Drumtochty, their friends tak tae propheseein' deith."

Lachlan had crept over to Flora's side, and both were waiting.

"Na, na; ye ken a' never tell lees like the graund ceety doctors, and a'll warrant Flora 'ill be in kirk afore Martinmas, and kiltin' up the braes as hardy as a hielan' sheltie by the new year."

Flora puts an arm round her father's neck, and draws down his face to hers, but the doctor is looking another way.

"Dinna fash wi' medicine; gie her plenty o' fresh milk and plenty o' air. There's nae leevin, for a doctor wi' that Drumtochty air; it hasna a marra in Scotland. It starts frae the Moray Firth and sweeps doon Badenoch, and comes ower the moor o' Rannoch and across the Grampians. There's the salt o' the sea, and the caller air o' the hills, and the smell o' the heather, and the bloom o' mony a flower in't. If there's nae disease in the organs o'

the body, a puff o' Drumtochty air wud bring back a man frae the gates o' deith."

"You hef made two hearts glad this day, Dr. MacLure," said Lachlan, outside the door, "and I am calling you Barnabas."

"Ye've ca'd me waur names than that in yir time," and the doctor mounted his horse. "It's dune me a warld o' guid tae see Flora in her hame again, and I'll gie Marget Howe a cry in passin' and send her up tae hae a crack, for there's no a wiser wumman in the glen."

When Marget came, Flora told her the history of her letter.

"It wass a beautiful night in London, but I will be thinking that there iss no living person caring whether I die or live, and I wass considering how I could die, for there iss nothing so hopeless as to hef no friend in a great city. It iss often that I hef been alone on the moor, and no man within miles, but I wass never lonely; oh, no! I had plenty of good company. I would sit down beside a burn, and the trout will swim out from below a stone, and the cattle will come to drink, and the muirfowl will be crying to each other, and the sheep will be bleating, oh, yes! and there are the bees all round, and a string of wild ducks above your head. It iss a busy place, a moor; and a safe place, too, for there iss not one of the animals will hurt you. No, the big highlanders will only look at you and go away to their pasture. But it iss weary to be in London and no one to speak a kind word to you, and I will be looking at the crowd that iss always passing,

and I will not see one kent face, and when I looked in at the lighted windows the people were all sitting round the table, but there was no place for me. Millions and millions of people, and not one to say 'Flora,' and not one sore heart if I died that night. Then a strange thing happened, as you will be considering, but it iss good to be a Highlander, for we see visions. You maybe know that a wounded deer will try to hide herself, and I crept into the shadow of a church, and wept. Then the people and the noise and the houses passed away like the mist on the hill, and I was walking to the kirk with my father, oh, yes! and I saw you all in your places, and I heard the Psalms, and I could see through the window the green fields and the trees on the edge of the moor. And I saw my home, with the dogs before the door, and the flowers that I planted, and the lamb coming for her milk, and I heard myself singing, and I awoke. But th re was singing, oh, yes! and beautiful, too, for the dark church was open, and the light was falling over my head from the face of the Virgin Mary. When I arose she was looking down at me in the darkness, and then I knew that there was service in the church, and this was the hymn:

“ ‘There is a fountain filled with blood.’

“So I went in and sat down at the door. The sermon was on the Prodigal Son, but there iss only one word I remember. ‘You are not forgotten or cast off,’ the preacher said; ‘you

are missed,’ and then he will come back to it again, and it was always ‘missed, missed, missed.’ Sometime he will say, ‘If you had a plant, and you had taken great care of it, and it was stolen, would you not miss it?’ And I will be thinking of my geraniums, and saying, ‘yes’ in my heart. And then he will go on, ‘If a shepherd was counting his sheep, and there was one short, does he not go out to the hill and seek for it?’ and I will see my father coming back with that lamb that lost its mother. My heart was melting within me, but he will still be pleading, ‘If a father had a child, and she left her home and lost herself in the wicked city, she will still be remembered in the old house, and her chair will be there,’ and I will be seeing my father all alone with the Bible before him, and the dogs will lay their heads on his knee, but there iss no Flora. So I slipped out into the darkness and cried, ‘Father!’ but I could not go back, and I knew not what to do. But this was ever in my ear, ‘missed,’ and I was wondering if God will be thinking of me. ‘Perhaps there may be a sign,’ I said, and I went to my room, and I saw the letter. It was not long before I will be in the train, and all the night I held your letter in my hand, and when I was afraid I will read, ‘Your father loves you more than efer,’ and I will say, ‘This is my warrant.’ Oh, yes! and God was fery good to me, and I did not want for friends all the way home.

“The English guard noticed me cry, and he will take care of me all the night, and see me

off at Muirtown, and this iss what he will say as the train wass leaving, in his cheery English way, 'Keep up your heart, lass, there's a good time coming,' and Peter Bruce will be waiting for me at the Junction, and a gentle man iss Peter Bruce, and Maister Moncur will be singing a psalm to keep up my heart, and I will see the light, and then I will know that the Lord hass had mercy upon me. That iss all I have to tell you, Marget, for the rest I will be saying to God."

"But there iss something I must be telling," said Lachlan, coming in, "and it iss not easy."

He brought over the Bible and opened it at the family register where his daughter's name had been erased; then he laid it down before Flora, and bowed his head on the bed.

"Will you ever be able to forgive your father?"

"Give me the pen, Marget," and Flora wrote for a minute, but Lachlan never moved.

When he lifted his head, this was what he read in a vacant space:

FLORA CAMPBELL,

Missed, April, 1873.

Found, September, 1873.

"Her father fell on her neck and kissed her."

IV.

AS A LITTLE CHILD.

Drumtochty made up its mind slowly upon any newcomer, and for some time looked into the far distance when his name was mentioned. He himself was struck with the studied indifference of the parish, and lived under the delusion that he had escaped notice. Perhaps he might have felt uncomfortable if he had suspected that he was under a microscope, and the keenest eyes in the country were watching every movement at kirk and market. His knowledge of theology, his preference in artificial manures, his wife's Sabbath dress, his skill in cattle, and his manner in the Kildrummie train, went as evidence in the case, and were duly weighed. Some morning the floating opinion suddenly crystallized in the kirk-yard, and there is only one historical instance in which judgment was reversed. It was a strong proof of Lachlan Campbell's individuality that he impressed himself twice on the parish, and each time with a marked adjective.

Lachlan had been superintending the theology of the glen and correcting our ignorance from an unapproachable height for two years before the word went forth, but the glen had been thinking.