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TOWANDA:

Saturday Morning, February 3, 1855.

Selected Poetry.

(From the London Athenaeum.
THE PROUDEST LADY.

BY T. WESTWOOD.

The Queen is proud upon her throne,
And proud are her maids so fine;
But the proudest lady that ever was known,
Is a little lady of mine.
Oh! she flouts me, she flouts me,
And spins and scorns and scorns me;
Though I drop on my knee and sue for grace,
And beg and beseech, with the saddest face,
Still ever the same she doubts me.

She is seven, by the calendar—
A lily almost as tall—
But oh! this little lady's far
The proudest lady of all.
To spin and scorn and scorn me;
It's her sport and pleasure to flout me.
But ah! I've a notion it might but play—
And that, say what she will and feign what she may,
She can't well do without me!

When she rides on her nag away,
By park and road and river,
In a little hat, so jaunty and gay,
Oh! then she's prouder than ever!
And oh! what faces, what faces!
And all her pride forsakes her.
Why, the very pony prances and winks,
And tosses his head, and plainly thinks
He may ape her airs and graces!

But at times, like a pleasant tune,
A sweeter mood o'er takes her;
Oh! then she's sunny as skies of June,
And all her pride forsakes her.
Oh! she laughs round me so fairly!
Oh! she laughs round me so rarely!
Oh! she coaxes and nuzzles and pines and grieves
In my puzzled face with her two great eyes,
And says, "I love you dearly!"

Oh! the Queen is proud on her throne,
And proud are her maids so fine;
But the proudest lady that ever was known,
Is this little lady of mine.
Good luck! she flouts me, she flouts me,
And spins and scorns and scorns me;
But ah! I've a notion it might but play—
And that, say what she will and feign what she may,
She can't well do without me!

Selected Tale.

ANNIE LIVINGSTONE.

Not far from the straggling village of Neihan Foot in Clydesdale, stood, many years ago, a small cottage inhabited by a widow and her two daughters. Their poverty and misfortunes secured for them a certain degree of interest among their neighbors; but the peculiarities of the widow prevented much intercourse between the family and the inhabitants of the district.

In her youth "daft Jennie," as she was called in the village, had been the belle of Neihan Foot; but by coquetry and love of admiration, she had excited great jealousy among the girls of the country side; and her success in securing the handsomest lad in the place as her husband, had not tended to increase her popularity. Those days, however, had long passed away. A terrible calamity had befallen her; and one single night had deprived her of home and husband. A sudden flood, or "speat," of the river had inundated their cottage; and in their endeavors to save the wreck of their furniture from destruction, her husband had lost his life, and her eldest daughter received such injuries as to leave her a helpless cripple for the rest of her days.

Jennie, never very strong-minded, broke down completely under these accumulated misfortunes; and though her bodily health was restored after the fever which followed, she rose up from her sick bed an idiot, or rather what is called in Scotland "daft," that peculiar state of mind between idocy and mania.

The charity of a neighboring proprietor gave her a cottage rent free, the Neihan Foot people gave what help they could in furnishing it, but they were themselves too poor to do more, so that the whole support of her helpless mother and sister devolved on Annie Livingstone, the younger daughter, a handsome girl of fifteen years of age.

It is only by living among the peasantry of Scotland that we learn fully to appreciate the warm heart and heroic self-sacrifices which are often concealed under their calm exterior and apparent coldness of manner; and no one unacquainted with her previous history could have guessed that Annie Livingstone, the blithest haymaker, the best reaper, the hardest worker in the field or house, the most smiling, cheerful, and best conducted girl in the valley of Neihan, had some sorrows which fall to the lot of a few in the world. Day after day she had to leave her bedridden sister alone and untended to seek a scanty means of subsistence for the family in out-of-doors labor; while more than half of her hours of rest and refreshment were occupied in running down to the cottage, to see that Marian required nothing, that her mother had remembered to make the porridge, or having done so, had given Marian her share instead of devouring it all herself. But a year of care of her helpless daughter was not the only thing Annie had to dread from "daft Jennie." The peculiar temper and disposition of her girlhood subsisted still, and no longer kept in check by intellect, displayed themselves in a thousand vagaries, which rendered her the laughing stock of the village, and caused bitter mortification to her daughter. Once or twice Annie Livingstone had ventured to interfere with her mother's mode of proceeding, but instead of doing good by her endeavors, she not only brought upon herself reproaches, curses, even blows, but by exciting the revengeful cunning of madness, occasioned the perpetration of malicious tricks, which greatly added to her previous annoyances.

It was wonderful that in such circumstances the young girl contrived to keep her temper and good spirits; but she was well-principled and strong-minded, and as she sometimes said when the neighbors pined for what she had to bear—"Oh, woman! but the back is made for the burden; and he that has seen fit to give me heavy trials has given me also a stout heart and braw shoulders to bear them. And better than all, He

has given me my ain dear Marion to be a help and comfort to me in all my difficulties."

"A help lassie? A hindrance you mean?"
"No, woman, a help. Gude kin my spirit would fail me out and but if I had no Marion to keep me up—to read to me out of the Lord's book—for you ken I am no great scholar myself—and to learn me bonnie psalms and hymns to sing when I am dowie (disheartened)."

The picture displayed by these simple words was a touching one; but much more touching was the reality of Annie's devotion to Marian. When her day's labor was over, she hurried back to her poverty-stricken home; and having swept out and dusted the kitchen, and set on the kettle for tea—an indulgence which she labored hard to afford the invalid—she would creep up the ladder-like stairs to the loft, which was her sister's sleeping chamber, and, wrapping her in an old shawl, would carry her down stairs, place her in her own peculiar chair, and wait upon her with the tenderness of a sister and the watchfulness of a slave.

When tea was over, the open Bible was laid on the table; a splinter of the clear candle coal of the country, which the very poor of the district frequently used instead of candles, was set on the upper bar of the grate; and by its flickering light the two sisters would spend the evening together, the younger employed in darning and patching their well-worn garments, the elder in reading to her from the holy volume. Meanwhile "daft Jennie" would wander in and out, backward and forward, sometimes amusing herself with playing spiteful tricks on Annie—to whom as years rolled by, she seemed to take a strange antipathy—sometimes sitting covered up on the hearth, mauling and moaning, and in spite of their efforts to the contrary, producing the most depressing effect upon her daughter's spirits. At such times it was useless to try to induce her to go to bed; her natural perversity seemed to find pleasure in refusing to do so, till Annie, worn out by her hard day's work, was ready to fall asleep in her chair, and was yet unable to go to bed till she had seen her mother safely in hers.

In spite of these disadvantages, however, Annie grew up a handsome, cheerful girl, respected by all who knew her, and dearly loved by those who were intimate with her. But she had very few intimates. She had no leisure to waste in idle gossip, she could not spend an evening hour rambling by the sparkling Neihan water, or by the banks of the stately Clyde; no one ever found her loitering in the hay-field after the sun was down; no one ever met her at a kirk (harvest home) or other rural gayety; and on Saturday at eleven she would hurry home to Marian, rather than join the group of merry lads and lassies gathered round the village well. Marian was her one engrossing thought—to be with her, her greatest happiness; and no holiday pleasures could in her eyes equal the delight she felt when, on a summer Sabbath afternoon, she carried her helpless charge in her arms to the top of Dykebut's field, and let her look at the trees, the sky, and the rushing water, and listen to the song of the lark as it flattered in the blue ether above them, or to the mavis singing in the old apple tree that hung its branches so temptingly over the orchard wall.

But a time came when what had hitherto been Annie's greatest pleasure, was put in competition with one far greater; when the heart that had lavished so much affection on her crippled sister, and had stood steadily in filial duty to a selfish and lunatic mother, was subject to a trying ordeal.

One eventful year, when an early spring and intensely hot summer had caused the confidants of Blinckbonnie to ripen with such unheard-of rapidity that the Irish reapers had not yet made their appearance in their neighborhood, it was announced throughout the vale of Neihan, that if every man, woman and child in the district did not aid in getting the harvest, half the crop would be lost. Now, as David Caldwell, the tenant of Blinckbonnie farm was a great favorite in the neighborhood, everybody who could handle the sickle, responded to his appeal, and made quite a "play" (fete) of going to reap at Blinckbonnie. Marian Livingstone had been so great a sufferer that season, that Annie had given up farm-labor for "sewing work," as she called embroidery; that she might be more at home with her sister, and secure a larger income; but sedentary employment was so repugnant to her natural active habits, that she rejoiced at the necessity which forced her to join the reapers, for David Caldwell himself had asked her to come, and her and his family had been too steadily kind to Marian for her to refuse such a request, even had she wished it. But she did not wish it; and she was among the first of the reapers who appeared at the farm.

Blinckbonnie was, as its name suggests, a very pretty place. Situated on the slope of a gentle hill that faced the south, it was the earliest farm in that part of Clydesdale; and as the winding river bathed the foot of the hill, and the woods of Craignethan clothed the opposite bank, it was also a favorite resort of the young people of the neighborhood, who found a drink of May Caldwell's buttermilk, or a bite of her pease-meal sooner, a very pleasant conclusion to their evening strolls. In short Blinckbonnie was as popular a place as the Caldwell's were popular people, and everybody did their utmost to get the corn in quickly. As we have said, Annie Livingstone was a good hand at the "hook," or sickle; it was natural that the best "bender," or binder of sheaves, should be selected for the part of the field where she was; and much rural mirth and wit was thrown in the endeavors of the two very different people to secure this honorable title, and its attendant position. They were Alick Caldwell, the farmer's brother, a journeyman carpenter of Neihan foot, and Jamie Ross, the blacksmith, who had been friendly rivals all their lives, and were so in the present instance; but Annie was by general vote chosen umpire between them, and she gave judgment in Alick's favor.

In those days the Clydesdale lasses wore the old Scottish peasant dress of the short gown and pet-

coat, one which we fear is almost exploded, but which was as becoming as it was convenient. In many a girl who would have looked common-place in modern costume, appeared piquant, if not pretty; and to Annie Livingstone it was peculiarly suited. Her broad but sloping shoulder, and her rounded waist, showed to great advantage in the close fitting tight gown, whose clear pink color, contrasting with the deep of the linsey-woolsey petticoat gave a look of freshness and cleanliness to her whole appearance, which was enhanced by the spotless purity of her neckerchief, and the snowy whiteness of her throat. In short, with her well knit figure, her rosy cheeks, her smoothly snooded hair, her dark eyes, and her "wee bit mouth" sae sweet and bonnie, Annie was altogether a very comely lassie; and when she blushed and looked down, as Alick thanked her for her judgment given in his favor, he thought her so very pretty, that he was strongly tempted to catch her in his arms and give her a hearty kiss—a mode of expressing admiration, at which many girls in their primitive district might have been more flattered than annoyed; but there was something in Annie Livingstone's whole manner and conduct which made it impossible to take such a liberty with her.

Nevertheless; when the reapers returned home that night, Alick refused his brother's invitation to remain at Blinckbonnie; and he not only contrived to keep near Annie all the way home, but was waiting for her next morning at the end of Dykebut's field to escort her to the farm, and make himself agreeable to her on the way thither, by promising to show her where she could find some wild flower roots, which Marian had long wished to have transplanted to their little garden.

"It is a pity, Annie that you do not turn this kail yard of yours to better account," Alick said that evening, when, on the plea of carrying the roots for her, he accompanied her down to the cottage; "it would grow potatoes and turnips as well as kail, and that would make a pleasant change for Marian."

Annie blushed. "May be so," she said, ingeniously, "but I have nae time for garden-work. I wish whiles that I had, for Marian is terrible fond of flowers."

The hint, so unintentionally given, was seized with avidity, and from that time forward many of Alick's leisure hours were devoted to Annie's garden, and not a Sunday passed over without a visit to "daft Jennie's" cottage to bring a nosegay for Marian. Such considerations affected Annie very much; but Alick's weekly visit, after a time, gave her almost as much pain as pleasure. It was deplorable, certainly, to see how happy they made Marian; and to herself, personally, they were in every way gratifying, she did so like to hear her sister and Alick talk together, to listen to their remarks on the books they had read, and the thoughts they had thought; and to feel that, unlearned as she was, she could appreciate the intellectual gifts which both possessed, and which they had the power giving forth so well; but she soon found that to her mother Alick's presence was very distasteful. So long as he was there, she kept tolerably quiet—a stranger's presence generally has a certain control over persons afflicted as she was; but the moment he quitted the house, she identified herself for her enforced good behavior by increased restlessness and ill-temper. She abused Alick in no measured terms, ill-treated Annie worse than ever, and made Marian suffer in consequence.

And yet it was impossible to put an end to Alick's visits. If Annie told him not to come to the cottage, he said with a smile, "that he would not, if she forbade him, come ben the house; but he could not leave the garden uncared for, nor could he do without seeing her and Marian on Sabbaths in Dykebut's field. Marian would miss him if he did not come to see her, and bring her nosegay, and carry her down to the waterside, or to the bonnie firwood on the Larnak road; it was so dull for her poor body to spend like Sabbath in Dykebut's field. Besides Marian liked him to come, whatever Annie did."

Poor Annie's heart beat fast. "On Alick!" she began, but suddenly recollecting herself, she stopped abruptly, and no persuasion could induce her to finish her sentence.

She felt intuitively that it was not only to talk to Marian that Alick came so often. She was conscious that it was not Marian's eyes he sought when he spoke those beautiful words which caused her heart to glow, and which seemed to shed on earth, and tree, and sky, a glory they had never known till now. But she felt, also, that this ought not to be, that in her peculiar situation she was not entitled to encourage such attentions; and yet, alas! she could not be so unwomanly as to tell him plainly that she understood why he lavished so much kindness and time on her sister. No, she had nothing to but to let things take their course, and strive to guard her own heart against him. She no longer, therefore, interdicted his visits, but she took every opportunity that offered to leave him alone with Marian, and steal out, meanwhile, to the most sequestered spots near at hand, where she might commune with her own heart, and seek from heaven the strength necessary to sacrifice her own hopes of happiness to the claims of duty, and the comfort of her helpless charges.

Thus time stole on, till one of those lonely strolls she chanced to meet some of her acquaintances walking along the road in the Craignethan direction. They greeted heartily, and asked whether she would come with them to the preaching.

"The preaching?" she said. "What preaching?"

"Oh, lassie, did you no' hear that Mr. Cameron of Cambus, is to preach the night in the Campfield? He is a real grand preacher. You had best come."

Now this invitation was very tempting to Annie, for she could not afford to go more than once a fortnight to church at Larnak; several miles distant, and she liked nothing better than a "grand preacher," while enough of the old imaginative Cameronian temperament remained in her to make an

open air service more agreeable in her eyes than in a church.

"You see Annie," her friends contributed, "the day's preaching is a kind of trial, to see if the folk care for good doctrine; and if they come, we hear tell that Mr. Cameron will preach there like other Sabbath. Sae, come awa, like a good lassie—Marian can weel spare you for time."

"Maybe she can spare me the day," Annie answered, "for Alick is down by yonder the now, sae she will no' be wearyin, for want of me. Just bide a minute till I see."

And away she flew to make the proposal to Marian. She gave her unqualified approbation to Annie's going; but a shadow passed over Alick's face, even while he volunteered a promise to remain with Marian during the sister's absence, and added, with a laugh, which somehow had little mirth in it, that he had just been telling Marian that he thought he must get on the kettle himself the night if he was to get his tea with them, for Annie seemed to have forgotten them altogether.

"Oh, no, I'll sort the kettle," Annie said nervously as she lifted it from the crook, and proceeded to fill it with water at the well; but Alick took it from her saying at the same time that "it would set her better if she gaed to her ain room, and made her self braw for the preaching."

The touch of bitterness in his tone as he said this, brought the tears to Annie's eyes. He little guessed how willingly she would have given up the preaching, anything to spend an hour his company, if it had been right; but she felt that it was not so for either of their sakes, so she brushed away her tears, smoothed her glossy hair, put a silk handkerchief he had given her round her neck; and having seen that Marian had everything she required, and that her mother was quietly asleep in her chair, she hurried to join her friends.

It was a lovely September evening. The leaves were bright with the tints of early autumn; the apple trees for which Clydesdale is famous, laden with golden fruit, hung temptingly over the orchard walls; and the high road, passing through a gently undulating country abounded in charming peeps of the ever-flowing Clyde, whose varied banks, sometimes rich in wood, sometimes hemmed in by massive rocks, and sometimes skirted by gently sloping and extensive meadows, comprised some of the loveliest river scenery in Scotland. Annie, however, walked forward with a heavy heart. What was it to her that the sky was bright, and the sun brilliant? that the soft, fleecy clouds piled themselves up in fantastic forms round the horizon, and that all nature seemed happy and joyous? There was an oppression on her spirits she could not shake off—a feeling that some crises of her fate was at hand which she had no power to avert, but whose consequence would take the life from her heart, the glory from her sun and sky. Alick had spoken to her as he had never done before, as if he thought that others might have more influence over her than he had, as if she could care for any one thing or person to fix her thoughts on the place to which she was going, and for what purpose, Alick's voice rang in her ear—Alick's sad disappointment look haunted her memory; and she reached her destination long before she regained her composure.

The Campfield was a small holme washed by the Neihan Water, which making a sudden whirl at that point, surrounded it on three sides, while the fourth was bounded by a wood hill, which separated it from the ruined Castle of Craignethan. It was a tradition in the country, that the spot had been a camp of the Covenanters, in the days of Claverhouse, and that a band of Royalists had been defeated there before the great battle of Bothwell Brig. The people of the district still point out the path by which the Covenanters gained the hill that commanded Craignethan Castle; and allege that, for a time at least, the Royalists were in their hands. At all events, the place is so connected in their minds with the days of the Covenant, that it is a favorite site for a field preaching; and nothing can be more picturesque than the scene it presents under such an aspect. The steep hill-side, the murmuring water, the soft tints of the turf, the crowd of listeners, in every attitude of earnest attention, hanging on the eloquent words of the preacher, take one back to the old times when, in caves and dells, and bleak moorlands, the stern men of the Solemn League and Covenant listened to the truth at the risk of their own lives, and those of their nearest and dearest. Just such a preacher as might have led these warlike and determined men as Mr. Cameron, of Cambus. He was old in years, with silver hair and wrinkled brow; but he had a clear, penetrating eye, and that look of power, mingled with gentleness, that uncompromising force of right and truth, which strike conviction to every heart, and rouse men's souls to do or die.

At any other time Annie Livingstone would have listened to the preacher with a kindling eye and glowing cheek, but to-day she sat there, pale and cold, struggling to quell the tempest that whispered to her to forsake her natural duties for the love of one who was becoming dearer to her than all the world beside. She fixed her eyes on the minister—she endeavored to follow his words, but the prayer fell unheeded on her ear; and when the full swell of the psalm, preceding the sermon, rose into the air, her voice, generally the clearest, and sweetest of the congregation, quivered and was silent. But the music was not wholly without influence on her tormented heart; and when they resumed their places to give ear to the sermon, her spirits felt more attuned to the duties of the hour.

The text given out was this—"No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." Annie started as the words were uttered, and as she listened to the declamations which Mr. Cameron deduced from them, she felt as if he must have known her inmost thoughts, so forcibly did he warn his hearers of the sin of forsaking the true and narrow path of duty, to follow the devices of their own hearts, so powerfully did he press upon them the necessity of sacrificing all that was most dear to them, even if it

threatened to interfere with the appointed course of life which God had traced out for them. Annie's heart beat painfully, for she knew too well that he spoke the truth. She felt that if she became Alick Caldwell's wife she could not then perform, as she now did, those filial and sisterly offices which had been hers from childhood, and which it would be mean and criminal to forsake. When she rose to receive the old minister's blessing, she vowed with a sad heart, but a steadfast spirit, that, come what would, she would abide by her duty. Poor girl! she little thought how near and severe a test awaited her.

"Annie," said a voice at her ear, as she turned to leave the Campfield; "did you no' ken I was so near you?"

Alick need not have asked the question, for the sudden flash of the cheek, and the quick bright gleam of the eye, were enough to show her previous ignorance.

"Marian bade me follow you, lassie. She said she did not like the look of the sky, and would feel mair at ease if I conveyed you home."

"Hout," said Annie hastily; "what makes Marian sae timorous? The sky is blue and bright, and even if it should be wet, what does a drop of rain signify?"

"I thought you would, have liked me to come, Annie," was Alick's simple answer.

Annie turned away her head to conceal how much his sorrowful tone affected her.

"Ay, so I do," she said with assumed cheerfulness; "but I dinna like Marian being left alone, so we had best walk fast home," and she quickened her pace. As they did so, a distant muttering of thunder was heard, and Annie added, "Marian was right, after all. It is wonderful how she guesses some things, Alick. She is like the birds and the beasts that get restless and uncomfortable before a storm, although there is not a sign of it in the heavens bigger than a man's hand."

"Thatane is bigger," Alick said, pointing to a mass of threatening cloud which was rapidly covering the sky; "and if you would take my advice, Annie, you would gang with with me to Blinckbonnie, and bide there till the storm is past."

"No, no," she said nervously; "I mean gang home to Marian, and my mother, poor body."

Alick restrained no further, but silently followed her, as she flew rather than ran in the direction of Neihan Foot. It was growing very dark, and the rest of the congregation, having no such haste as Annie's to hurry homeward, had already taken shelter in the cottage near Campfield, advising her as they did so, to follow her example.

"I cannot," she said; "I must get home, I need I must," and striking off from the high road, she hurried along the path by the Neihan water. The evening grew darker and darker; it seemed as if the twilight had been forgotten, and the bright day had suddenly been merged in night. The thunder became every moment louder, and the lightning flashed through the trees with fearful brilliancy. The river roared along its banks; and as they approached the spot of the Neihan's confluence with the Clyde, even Annie's brave spirit trembled. She wondered whether they could cross the stepping-stones in such a flood, and in such darkness. But she had a strong will; she knew the stones to trust as well by night as by day; and besides, the storm had so lately begun, that the Neihan, she thought, could not have risen very much. So she hurried forward still faster, and her foot was already on the overhanging bank, when Alick drew her forcibly back.

"Are you mad, Annie," he cried, to try the stepping-stones in such a sea? (flood) And he threw his strong arms around her.

"Let me go, Alick! I must get home to Marian," she said, struggling to get free; and she might have succeeded in doing so, for she was nearly his equal in physical strength, had not a vivid flash lighted up the scene at the moment, and shown her the peril which awaited her. The generally calm Neihan Water was seething like a cauldron, and careering down to the Clyde with uncontrolled force. As if a thick curtain had been with drawn by the flash, she saw the banks giving way before her eyes, and the trees that grew on them nodding to the fall. It was a glorious but terrific picture, as the whole bend of the river illuminated by that fearful light shone out for one single instant then disappeared in the darkness. But short as that glance had been, it had shown her that had not Alick pulled her back, she must have been engulfed in the waters, and no mortal power could have brought to shore alive. The imminence of the danger from which she had been saved overcame her with a sudden weakness; she trembled, her struggles ceased, her head drooped on Alick's shoulder, and she burst into tears.

"Annie," he said soothingly, "dinna greet, for you see I couldna let you drown yourself alone my ain, and no'try to save you;" and the stalwart arms that had lately so sternly opposed her will, now folded her in a close embrace.

"Oh, Alick, she replied, with her usual simple truthfulness, "it's no' that gars me greet but the thought that my willingness might have cost your life as well as my ain."

She stooped down and pressed a first kiss on the brow that still rested on his shoulder.

"Annie, my own Annie!" he whispered; "what would life be to me wantin' you?"

"Dinna say that, Alick," she said hurriedly, rousing herself from the momentary yielding to her softer feelings; "this is neither a time nor a place to think of such things!" I mean gang home to Marian."

It was impossible for Annie after that Sabbath adventure to conceal either from herself or Alick that they loved each other dearly; but no persuasion could induce her to consent to her to be his wife. In vain he represented that he could consider Marian's presence in his household as a blessing, and that he had been so long accustomed to her mother's ways that he could find no difficulty in accommodating himself to them.

"It was true that Mrs. Livingstone was a little afraid of him, but that was so much the better as it evidently kept her in check."

Annie shook her head.

"She knew better what her mother really was, and to what she would expose them both; and she loved Alick too dearly to inflict such anxiety upon him."

"Then could she not remain in her present home and have a lassie to wait on her?" Alick asked. He was well to do in the world; he could easily afford the expenses, and that would make all straight.

But Annie was firm in resisting every temptation. On that same night when Alick had saved her life she had knelt down by Marian's bed, and in her presence had vowed a vow to the Lord, that nothing should ever persuade her to yield to him in this matter. And she would not, she could not be forsaken.

"Well, well, Annie," Alick said with a faint smile, "a willful wife maun hae her way. He that will to Cooper maun to Cooper; but if Annie Livingstone is no' to be my wife I'll tak' my if any other shall have me." And he marched out of the cottage.

The tears sprang into Annie's eyes—they came there very often now—but she wiped them away and said—

"Ay ay, he thinks so now; but men canna wait as women do, hoping and hoping when the heart is sick and the spirit faint. He will marry some day; and if it be for his happiness, I will be thankful."

Still it was very hard for her to be thankful, when, year by year, she saw him courted by the bonniest lasses of Clydesdale; or learning that Alick Caldwell had been the blithest singer at the Homagey (last night of the year) at Blinckbonnie, or that every one suspected that the fine valentine Ellen Loder got on St. Valentine's day came from "bonnie Alick." At length the report of his engagement to Ellen became so prevalent, that even Marian believed it; and one fine day, when returning from Larnak, where she had been to carry home her sewing work, Annie herself met Alick and Ellen walking together in the fir wood. A pang went through her heart at this confirmation of all she had heard, and she was startled to find from it how little belief she had hitherto had in the truth of the story. Yet it was only natural and right that it should be true. It was now three years since she had refused Alick, and very few men would have waited for her so long.

Thus thinking, she was a little surprised to see him come to the cottage as usual, and bring with him Marian's nosegay, and some numbers of a periodical, with which he had supplied her regularly since its commencement. But though he had not forgotten to be kind to Marian, Annie fancied that he looked less cheerful than he generally did; and with the view of putting him at ease, she took courage to congratulate him on his marriage to Ellen, and to wish him every happiness.

He got up, and advanced straight to the place where she stood, he took her two hands in his, and said seriously—

"Annie, do you mean what you say? Do you really believe that I love, or, rather, that I mean to marry Ellen, while you are still Annie Livingstone?"

The color came and went in Annie's cheek and her eyes filled under his steady glance; but she answered faintly—

"I did mean it, Alick; and think you would only do what is right and prudent if you married her."

"And you Marian," he said, turning to the poor cripple. "What do you think?"

"That a man is the better of a wife," she said quietly, "and that as you will never get Annie, you might just as well take Ellen."

Alick looked distressed, and muttered—

"For I've forsaken me, Marian, I'll be tak' up wi' Jean."

That is what the old sage of the Evebush says. I ken that," he added; "but it is not my doctrine, Marian. I consider marriage in a higher and holier light; and if Annie refuses me, I must e'en rest as I am. So wyeon have my thought on the matter, and you must never again insult me by believing the nonsense of the Neihan Foot chatters."

And thus things went on, month after month, year after year; and the only comfort poor Annie had in her life of trial was the conviction that she was doing her duty. As age advanced on daft Jennie, she became more unmanageable; and all the exertions her daughter could make were scarcely sufficient to keep her eccentricities within bounds, and to support her and Marian. But Annie contrived in somehow; and not even Alick guessed the bitter struggles, the personal sacrifices, the weariness and the starvation she endured to keep her poor mother from the parish, and to provide for Marian the little luxuries which in her position were actual necessities.

The end however came at length, and when it was least expected. "Daft Jennie" took a fever and died, and Annie's toils were comparatively light thenceforward; but in one particular it seemed as if the release had come too late, for Alick, weary of waiting so many years as Jacob did for Leah, had quitted Neihan Foot a few months previously. Some said he had gone to Edinburgh, some said to London; but at all events, he had disappeared entirely from the neighborhood; and in those days of heavy postage, so little intercourse was kept up between distant friends, that even his brother at Blinckbonnie only wrote to him at long intervals. Thus it happened that nearly a whole year elapsed ere Alick learned "that daft Jennie was gone at last, and a' the talk thought poor Annie had a good ridance of her; but nevertheless she looked mair ill and pale than she had ever done before."

The news caused Alick to hurry back to Neihan Foot, and one beautiful spring morning he reached the home of his childhood. He had walked from Larnak; and, somewhat overcome with heat and