

and she had but just risen. The apartment, however, bore witness that her young friend had paid her the accustomed morning visit; the fire was blazing on a clean, comfortable-looking hearth, and every little piece of furniture it contained was arranged with the most scrupulous care. Her devotions were hardly over when the well-known tap was again heard at the door.

"Come in, my lassie," said the widow; and then lowering her voice, as the light foot of her friend was heard on the threshold, "God," she said, "has been ever kind to me; far, very far, aboon my best deservings; and oh, may he bless and reward her who has done so meikle, meikle for me!" The young girl entered and took her seat beside her.

"You told me, mother," she said, "that to-morrow is Earnest's birthday. I have been thinking of it all last night, and feel as if my heart were turning into stone. But when I am alone it is always so. There is a cold, death-like weight at my breast, that makes me unhappy; though, when I come to you, and we speak together, the feeling passes away, and I become cheerful."

"Ah, my bairn," replied the old woman, "I fear I'm no your friend, meikle as I love you. We speak owre, owre often o' the lost, for our foolish hearts find mair pleasure in that than in anything else; but ill does it fit us for being alone. Weel do I ken your feeling, — a stone deadness o' the heart, — a feeling there are no words to express, but that seems as it were insensibility itself turning into pain; and I ken, too, my lassie, that it is nursed by the very means ye tak to flee from it. Ye maun learn to think mair o' the living, and less o' the dead. Little, little does it matter how a puir worn-out creature like me passes the few broken days o' life that remains to her; but ye are