

МАРГАРЕТ ОЛИФАНТ

SIR ROBERT'S
FORTUNE

Маргарет Олифант

Sir Robert's Fortune

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Margaret Oliphant

Sir Robert's Fortune

CHAPTER I

“We are to see each other no more.”

These words were breathed rather than spoken in the dim recess of a window, hidden behind ample curtains, the deep recess in which the window was set leaving room enough for two figures standing close together. Without was a misty night, whitened rather than lighted by a pale moon.

“Who says so?”

“Alas! my uncle,” said the white figure, which looked misty, like the night, in undistinguishable whiteness amid the darkness round.

The other figure was less distinguishable still, no more than a faint solidity in the atmosphere, but from it came a deeper whisper, the low sound of a man’s voice. “Your uncle!” it said.

There was character in the voices enough to throw some light upon the speakers, even though they were unseen.

The woman’s had a faint accentuation of feeling, not of anxiety, yet half defiance and half appeal. It seemed to announce a fact unchangeable, yet to look and hope for a contradiction. The man’s had a tone of acceptance and dismay. The fiat which had gone forth was more real to him than to her, though she was in the position of asserting and he of opposing it.

“Yes,” she said, “Ronald, my uncle—who has the strings of the purse and every thing else in his hands—”

There was a moment’s pause, and then he said: “How does he mean to manage that?”

“I am to be sent off to-morrow—it’s all settled—and if I had not contrived to get out to-night, you would never have known.”

“But where? It all depends upon that,” he said with a little impatience.

“To Dalrugas,” she answered, with a sigh; and then: “It is miles and miles from anywhere—a moor and a lodge, and not even a cottage near. Dougal and his wife live there, and take care of the place; not a soul can come near it—it is the end of the world. Oh, Ronald, what shall I do? what shall I do?”

Once more in the passionate distress of the tone there was an appeal, and a sort of feverish hope.

“We must think; we must think,” he said.

“What will thinking do? It will not change my uncle’s heart, nor the distance, nor the dreadful solitude. What does he care if it kills me? or any body?” The last words came from her with a shriller tone of misery, as if it had become too much to bear.

“Hush, hush, for Heaven’s sake; they will hear you!” he said.

On the other side of the curtain there was a merry crowd in full career of a reel, which in those days had not gone out of fashion as now. The wild measure of the music, now quickening to lightning speed, now dropping to sedater motion, with the feet of the dancers keeping time, filled the atmosphere—a shriek would scarcely have been heard above that mirthful din.

“Oh, why do you tell me to hush?” cried the girl impetuously. “Why should I mind who hears? It is not for duty or love that I obey him, but only because he has the money. Am I caring for his money? I could get my own living: it would not want much. Why do I let him do what he likes with me?”

“My darling,” said the man’s voice anxiously, “don’t do any thing rash, for God’s sake! Think of our future. To displease him, to rebel, would spoil every thing. I see hope in the loneliness, for my part. Be patient, be patient, and let me work it out.”

"Oh, your working out!" she cried. "What good has it done? I would cut the knot. It would be strange if we two could not get enough to live upon—or myself, if you are afraid."

He soothed her, coming closer, till the dark shadow and the white one seemed but one, and murmured caressing words in her ears: "Let us wait till the case is desperate, Lily. It is not desperate yet. I see chances in the moor and the wilderness. He is playing into our hands if he only knew it. Don't, don't spoil every thing by your impatience! Leave it to me, and you'll see good will come out of it."

"I would rather take it into my own hands!" she cried.

"No, dearest, no! I see—I see all sorts of good in it. Go quite cheerfully, as if you were pleased. No, your own way is best—don't let us awake any suspicions—go as if you were breaking your heart."

"There will be no feigning in that," she said; "I shall be breaking my heart."

"For a moment," he said. "Weeping endureth for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

"Don't, Ronald! I can't bear to hear you quoting Scripture."

"Why not? I am not the devil, I hope," he said, with a low laugh.

There was a question in the girl's hot, impatient heart, and then a quick revulsion of feeling. "I don't know what to do, or to think; I feel as if I could not bear it," she said, the quick tears dropping from her eyes.

He wiped them tenderly away with the flourish of a white handkerchief in the dark. "Trust to me," he said soothingly. "Be sure it is for our good, this. Listen: they are calling for you, Lily."

"Oh, what do I care? How can I go among them all, and dance as if I were as gay as the rest, when my heart is broken?"

"Not so badly broken but that it will mend," he whispered, as with a clever, swift movement he put aside the curtain and led her through. He was so clever: where any other man would have been lost in perplexity, or even despair, Ronald Lumsden always saw a way through. He was never at a loss for an expedient: even that way of getting back to the room out of the shadow of the curtains no one could have performed so easily, so naturally as he did. He met and entered into the procession of dancers going out of the room after the exertions of that reel as if he and his partner formed part of it, and had been dancing too. People did not "sit out" in those days, and Ronald was famous for his skill in the national dance. Nobody doubted that he had been exerting himself with the rest. Lily was half English—that is, she had been sent to England for part of her education, and so far as reels were concerned, had lost some of her native skill, and was not so clever. She was not, indeed, supposed to be clever at all, though very nice, and pretty enough, and an heiress—at least she was likely to be an heiress, if she continued to please her uncle, who was not an easy man to please, and exacted absolute obedience. There were people who shook their heads over her chances, declaring that flesh and blood could not stand Sir Robert Ramsay's moods; but up to this time Lily had been more or less successful, and the stake being so great, she had, people said, "every encouragement" to persevere.

But Lily was by no means so strong as her lover, who joined the throng as if he had formed part of it, with a perfect air of enjoyment and light-heartedness. Lily could not look happy. It may be said that in his repeated assurance that all would be right, and that he would find a way out of it, she ought to have taken comfort, feeling in that a pledge of his fidelity and steadiness to his love. But there was something in this readiness of resource which discouraged, she could not have told why, instead of making her happy. It would have been so much simpler, so much more satisfactory, to have given up all thoughts of Sir Robert's money, and trusted to Providence and their own exertions to bring them through. Lily felt that she could make any sacrifice, live upon nothing, live anywhere, work her fingers to the bone, only to be independent, to be free of the bondage of the uncle and the consciousness that it was not for love but for his money that she had to accept all his caprices and yield him obedience. If Ronald would but have yielded, if he would have been imprudent, as so many young men were, how thankful she would have been! She would have been content with the poorest living anywhere to be free, to be with him whom she loved. She would have undertaken

the conduct of their little *ménage* herself, without even thinking of servants; she would have cooked for him, cleaned the house for him, shrunk from nothing. But that, alas, was not Ronald's way of looking at the matter. He believed in keeping up appearances, in being rich at almost any cost, and, at best, in looking rich if he were not really so; and, above all and beyond all, in keeping well with the uncle, and retaining the fortune. He would not have any doubt thrown on the necessity of that. He was confident of his own powers of cheating the uncle, and managing so that Lily should have all she wanted, in spite of him, by throwing dust in his eyes. But Lily's soul revolted against throwing dust in any one's eyes. This was the great difference between them. I do not say that there was any great sin in circumventing a harsh old man, who never paused to think what he was doing, or admitted a question as to whether he was or was not absolutely in the right. He was one of the men who always know themselves to be absolutely right; therefore he was, as may be said, fair game. But Lily did not like it. She would have liked a lover who said: "Never mind, we shall be happy without him and his fortune." She had tried every thing she knew to bring young Lumsden to this point. But she was not able to do so: his opinion was that every thing must be done to preserve the fortune, and that, however hard it might be, there was nothing so hard but that it must be done to humor old Sir Robert, to prevent him from cutting his niece out of his will. Was not this right? Was it not prudent, wise, the best thing? If he, an advocate without a fee, a briefless barrister, living as best he could on chance windfalls and bits of journalism, had been as bold as she desired, and carried her off from the house in Moray Place to some garret of his own up among the roofs, would not every-body have said that he had taken advantage of her youth and inexperience, and deprived her of all the comforts and luxuries she was used to? That Lily cared nothing for those luxuries, and that she was of the mettle to adapt herself to any circumstances, so long as she had somebody to love and who loved her, was not a thing to reckon with public opinion about; and, indeed, Ronald Lumsden would have thought himself quite unjustified in reckoning with it at all. To tell the truth, he had no desire on his own part to give up such modest luxuries for himself as were to be had.

The day of clubs was not yet, at least in Edinburgh, to make life easy for young men, but yet to get along, as he was doing precariously, was easier for one than it would be for two. Even Lily, all hot for sacrifice and for ministering with her own hands to all the needs of life, had never contemplated the idea of doing without Robina, her maid, who had been with her so many years that it was impossible for either of them to realize what life would be if they were separated. Even if it should be a necessary reality, Robina was included as a matter of course. How it might be that Lily should require to scrub, and clean, and cook with her own hands, while she was attended by a lady's maid, was a thing she had never reasoned out. You may think that a lady's maid would probably be of less use than her mistress had such service been necessary; but this was not Robina's case, who was a very capable person all round, and prided herself on being able to "turn her hand" to any thing. But then a runaway match was the last thing that was in Lumsden's thoughts.

It was a dance which every-body enjoyed that evening in the big, old-fashioned rooms in George Square. George Square has fallen out of knowledge in all the expansions of new Edinburgh, the Edinburgh that lies on the other side of the valley, and dates no farther back than last century. It also is of last century, but earlier than the Moray Places and Crescents; far earlier than the last developments, the Belgravia of the town. There Sir Walter once lived, in, I think, his father's house; and these substantial, ample, homely houses were the first outlet of the well-to-do, the upper classes, of Edinburgh out of the closes and high-up apartments, approached through the atrocities of a common stair, in which so refined and luxurious a sybarite as Lawyer Pleydell still lived in Sir Walter's own time. These mansions are severely plain outside—"undemonstrative," as Scotch pride arrogantly declares itself to be, aping humility with a pretence to which I, for one, feel disposed to allow no quarter; but they are large and pleasant inside, and the big square rooms the very thing to dance in or to feast in. They were full of a happy crowd, bright in color and lively in movement, with a larger share of golden hair and rosy cheeks than is to be seen in most assemblies, and, perhaps, a greater

freedom of laughter and talk than would have been appropriate to a solemn ball in other localities. For Edinburgh was not so large then as now, and they all knew each other, and called each other by their Christian names—boy and girl alike—with a general sense of fraternity modified by almost as many love affairs as there were pairs of boys and girls present. There were mothers and aunts all round the wide walls, but this did not subdue the hilarity of the young ones, who knew each other's mothers and aunts almost as well as they knew their own, and counted upon their indulgence. Lily Ramsay was almost the only girl who had nobody of her own to turn to; but this only made her the more protected and surrounded, every-body feeling that the motherless girl had a special claim. They were by no means angels, these old-fashioned Edinburgh folk: sharper tongues could not be than were to be found among them, or more wicked wits; but there was a great deal of kindness under the terrible turbans which crowned the heads of the elder ladies and the scarfs which fell from their bare shoulders, and they all knew every one, and every one's father and mother for generations back. Their dress was queer, or rather, I should have said, it was queer before the present revival of the early Victorian or late Georgian style began. They wore puffed-out sleeves, with small feather pillows in them to keep them inflated; they had bare shoulders and ringlets; they had scarfs of lace or silk, carefully disposed so as not to cover any thing, but considered very classical and graceful, drawn in over the elbows, by people who knew how to wear them, making manifest the slender waist (or often the outlines of a waist which had ceased to be slender) behind. And they had, as has been said, a dreadful particular, which it is to be hoped the blind fury of fashion will not bring up again—turbans upon their heads. Turbans such as no Indian or Bedouin ever wore, of all colors and every kind of savage decoration, such as may be seen in pictures of that alarming age.

When young Lumsden left his Lily, it was in the midst of a group of girls collected together in the interval between two dances, lamenting that the programme was nearly exhausted, and that mamma had made a point of not staying later than three o'clock. "Because it disturbs papa!" said one of them indignantly, "though we all know he would go on snoring if the Castle Rock were to fall!" They all said papa and mamma in those days.

"But mamma says there are so many parties going," said another: "a ball for almost every night next week; and what are we to do for dresses? Tarlatan's in rags with two, and even a silk slip is shameful to look at at the end of a week."

"Lily has nothing to do but to get another whenever she wants it," said Jeanie Scott.

"And throw away the old ones, she's such a grand lady," said Maggie Lauder.

"Hold all your tongues," said Bella Rutherford; "it does her this good, that she thinks less about it than any of us."

"She has other things to think of," cried another; and there was a laugh and a general chorus, "So have we all." "But, Lily! is Sir Robert as dour as ever?" one of the rosy creatures cried.

"I don't think I am going to any more of your balls," said Lily; "I'm tired of dancing. We just dance, dance, and think of nothing else."

"What else should we think about at our age?" said Mary Bell, opening wide a pair of round blue eyes.

"We'll have plenty other things to think about, mamma says, and that soon enough," said Alison Murray, who was just going to be married, with a sigh. "But there's the music striking up again, and who's my partner? for I'm sure I don't remember whether it's Alick Scott, or Johnnie Beatoun, or Bob Murray. Oh! is it you, Bob?" she said with relief, putting her hand upon an outstretched arm. They were almost all in a similar perplexity, except, indeed, such as had their own special partner waiting. Lily was almost glad that it was not Ronald, but a big young Macgregor, who led her off to the top of the room to a sedate quadrille. The waltz existed in those days, but it was still an indulgence, and looked upon with but scant favor by the mothers. The elder folks were scandalized by the close contact, and even the girls liked best that it should be an accepted lover, or at the least a brother or cousin, whose arm encircled their waist. So they still preferred dances in which there were "figures,"

and took their pleasure occasionally in a riotous “Lancers” or a merry reel with great relief. Lily was young enough to forget herself and her troubles even in the slow movement of the quadrilles, with every-body else round chattering and beaming and forgetting when it was their turn to dance. But she said to herself that it was the last. Of all these dances of which they spoke she would see none. When the others gathered, delighted to enjoy themselves, she would be gazing across the dark moor, hearing nothing but the hum of insects and the cry of the curlew, or, perhaps, a watchful blackbird in the little clump of trees. Well! for to-night she would forget.

I need not say it was Lumsden who saw her to her own door on the other side of the square. No one there would have been such a spoil-sport as to interfere with his right whatever old Sir Robert might say. They stole out in a lull of the leave-taking, when the most of the people were gone, and others lingered for just this “one more” for which the girls pleaded. The misty moonlight filled the square, and made all the waiting carriages look like ghostly equipages bent upon some mystic journey in the middle of the night. They paused at the corner of the square, where the road led down to the pleasant Meadows, all white and indefinite in the mist, spreading out into the distance. Lumsden would fain have drawn her away into a little further discussion, wandering under the trees, where they would have met nobody at that hour; but Lily was not bold enough to walk in the Meadows between two and three in the morning. She was willing, however, to walk up and down a little on the other side of the square before she said good-night. Nobody saw them there, except some of the coachmen on the boxes, who were too sleepy to mind who passed, and Robina, who had silently opened the door and was waiting for her mistress. Robina was several years older than Lily, and had relinquished all thoughts of a sweetheart in her own person. She stood concealing herself in the doorway, ready, if any sound should be made within which denoted wakefulness on the part of Sir Robert, to snatch her young lady even from her lover’s arms; and watching, with very mingled feelings, the pair half seen—the white figure congenial to the moonlight, and the dark one just visible, like a prop to a flower. “Lily’s her name and Lily’s her nature,” said Robina to herself, with a little moisture in her kind eyes; “but, oh! is he worthy of her, is he worthy of her?” This was too deep a question to be solved by any thing but time and proof, which are the last things to satisfy the heart. At last there was a lingering parting, and Lily stole, in her white wraps, all white from top to toe, into the dark and silent house.

CHAPTER II

Lily's room was faintly illuminated by a couple of candles, which, as it was a large room with gloomy furniture, made little more than darkness visible, except about the table on which they stood, the white cover of which, and the dressing-glass that stood upon it, diffused the light a little. It was not one of those dainty chambers in which our Lilys of the present day are housed. One side of the room was occupied by a large wardrobe of almost black mahogany, polished and gleaming with many years' manipulation, but out of reach of these little lights. The bed was a large four-post bed, which once had been hung with those moreen curtains which were the triumph of the bad taste of our fathers, and had their appropriate accompaniment in black hair-cloth sofas and chairs. Lily had been allowed to substitute for the moreen white dimity, which was almost as bad, and hung stiff as a board from the valance ornamented with bobs of cotton tassels. She could not help it if that was the best that could be done in her day. Every thing, except the bed, was dark, and the distance of the large room was black as night, except for the relief of an open door into a small dressing-room which Robina occupied, and in which a weird little dip candle with a long wick unsnuffed was burning feebly. Nobody can imagine nowadays what it was to have candles which required snuffing, and which, if not attended to, soon began to bend and topple over, with a small red column of consumed wick, in the midst of a black and smoking crust. A silver snuffer tray is quite a pretty article nowadays, and proves that its possessor had a grandfather; but then! The candles on the dressing-table, however, were carefully snuffed, and burned as brightly as was possible for them while Robina took off her young mistress's great white Indian mantle, with its silken embroideries, and undid her little pearl necklace. Lily had the milk-white skin of a Scotch girl, and the rose-tints; but she was brown in hair and eyes, as most people are in all countries, and had no glow of golden hair about her. She was tired and pale that night, and the tears were very near her eyes.

"Ye've been dancing more than ye should; these waltzes and new-fangled things are real exhaustin'," Robina said.

"I have been dancing very little," said Lily; "my heart was too heavy. How can you dance when you have got your sentence in your pocket, and the police coming for you to haul you away to the Grassmarket by skreigh of day?"

"Hoot, away with ye!" cried Robina, "what nonsense are ye talking? My bonnie dear, ye'll dance many a night yet at a' the assemblies, and go in on your ain man's airm—"

"It's you that's talking nonsense now. On whose arm? Have we not got our sentence, you and me, to be banished to Dalrugas to-morrow, and never to come back—unless—"

"Ay, Miss Lily, unless! but that's a big word."

"It is, perhaps, a big word; but it cannot touch me, that am not of the kind that breaks my word or changes my mind," said Lily, raising her head with a gesture full of pride.

"Oh, Miss Lily, my dear, I ken what the Ramsays are!" cried the faithful maid; "but there might be two meanings till it," and she breathed a half sigh over her young mistress's head.

"You think, I know—and maybe I once thought, too; but you may dismiss that from your mind, as I do," said the girl, with a shake of the head as if she were shaking something off. And then she added, clasping her hands together: "Oh, if I were strong enough just to say, 'I am not caring about your money. I am not afraid to be poor. I can work for my own living, and you can give your siller where you please!' Oh, Beenie, that is what I want to say!"

"No, my darlin', no; you must not say that. Oh, you must not say that!" Robina cried.

"And why? I must not do this or the other, and who are you that dares to say so? I am my mother's daughter as well as my father's, and if that's not as good blood, it has a better heart. I might go there—they would not refuse me."

"Without a penny," said Robina. "Can you think o't, Miss Lily? And is that no banishment too?"

Lily rose from her chair, shaking herself free from her maid, with her pretty hair all hanging about her shoulders. It was pretty hair, though it was brown like every-body else's, full of incipient curl, the crispness yet softness of much life. She shook it about her with her rapid movement, bringing out all the undertones of color, and its wavy freedom gave an additional sparkle to her eyes and animation to her look. "Without a penny!" she cried. "And who is caring about your pennies? You and the like of you, but not me, Beenie—not me! What do I care for the money, the filthy siller, the pound notes, all black with the hands they've come through! Am I minding about the grand dinners that are never done, and the parties, where you never see those you want to see, and the balls, where—Just a little cottage, a drink of milk, and a piece of cake off the girdle, and plenty to do: it's that that would please me!"

"Oh, my bonnie Miss Lily!" was all that Beenie said.

"And when I see," said the girl, pacing up and down the room, her hair swinging about her shoulders, her white under-garments all afloat about her in the energy of her movements, "that other folk think of that first. Whatever you do, you must not risk your fortune. Whatever you have to bear, you must not offend your uncle, for he has the purse-strings in his hand. Oh, my uncle, my uncle! It's not," she cried, "that I wouldn't be fond of him if he would let me, and care for what he said, and do what he wanted as far as I was able: but his money! I wish—oh, I wish his money—his money—was all at the bottom of the sea!"

"Whisht! whisht!" cried Beenie, with a movement of horror. "Oh, but that's a dreadful wish! You would, maybe, no like it yourself, Miss Lily, for all you think now; but what would auld Sir Robert be without his money? Instead of a grand gentleman, as he is, he would just be a miserable auld man. He couldna bide it; he would be shootin' himself or something terrible. His fine dinners and his house, and his made dishes and his wine that costs as much as would keep twa-three honest families! Oh, ye dinna mean it, ye dinna mean it, Miss Lily! You dinna ken what you are saying; ye wouldna like it yoursel', and, oh, to think o' him!"

Lily threw herself down in the big chair, which rose above her head with its high back and brought out all her whiteness against its sober cover. She was silenced—obviously by the thought thus suggested of Sir Robert as a poor man, which was an absurdity, and perhaps secretly, in that innermost seclusion of the heart, which even its possessor does not always realize, by a faint chill of wonder whether she would indeed and really like to be poor, as she protested she should. It was quite true that a drink of milk and a piece of oatcake appeared to her as much nourishment as any person of refinement need care for. In the novels of her day, which always affect the young mind, all the heroines lived upon such fare, and were much superior to beef and mutton. But there were undoubtedly other things—Robina, for instance; although no thought of parting from Robina had ever crossed Lily's mind as a necessary part of poverty. But she was silenced by these thoughts. She had not, indeed, ever confessed in so many words even to Robina, scarcely to herself, that it was Ronald who cared for the money, and that it was the want of any impulse on his part to do without it that carried so keen a pang to her heart. Had he cried, "A fig for the money!" then it might have been her part to temporize and be prudent. The impetuosity, the recklessness, should not, she felt, be on her side.

It was on the very next day that her decision was to be made, and it had not been till all other means had failed that Sir Robert had thus put the matter to the touch. He had opposed her in many gentler ways before it came to that. Sir Robert was not a brute or a tyrant—very far from it. He was an old gentleman of fine manners, pluming himself on his successes with "the other sex," and treating all women with a superfine courtesy which only one here and there divined to conceal contempt. Few men—one may say with confidence, no elderly man without wife or daughters—has much respect for women in general. It is curious, it is to some degree reciprocal, it is of course always subject to personal exceptions; yet it is the rule between the two sections of humanity which nevertheless have to live in such intimate intercourse with each other. In an old bachelor like Sir Robert, and one,

too, who was conscious of having imposed upon many women, this prepossession was more strong than among men of more natural relationships. And Lily, who was only his niece, and had not lived with him until very lately, had not overcome all prejudices in his mind, as it is sometimes given to a daughter to do. He had thought first that he could easily separate her from the young man who did not please him, and bestow her, as he had a right to bestow his probable heiress, on whom he pleased. When this proved ineffectual, he cursed her obstinacy, but reflected that it was a feature in women, and therefore nothing to be surprised at. They were always taken in by fictitious qualities—who could know it better than he?—and considered it a glory to stick to a suitor unpalatable to their belongings. And then he had threatened her with the loss of the fortune which she had been brought up to expect. “See if this fine fellow you think so much of will have you without your money,” he said. Lily had never in so many words put Lumsden to the trial, never proposed to him to defy Sir Robert; but she had made many an attempt to discover his thoughts, and even to push him to this rash solution, and, with an ache at her heart, had felt that there was at least a doubt whether the fine fellow would think so much of her if she were penniless. She had never put it to the test, partly because she dared not, though she had not been able to refrain from an occasional burst of defiance and hot entreaty to Sir Robert to keep his money to himself. And now she was to decide for herself—to give Ronald over forever, or to give over Edinburgh and the society in which she might meet him, and keep her love at the cost of martyrdom in her uncle’s lonely shooting-box on the moors. There was, of course, a second alternative—that which she had so often thought of: to refuse, to leave Sir Robert’s house, to seek refuge in some cottage, to live on milk and oatcake, and provide for herself. If the alternative had been to run away with her lover, to be married to him in humility and poverty, to keep his house and cook his dinners and iron his linen, Lily would not have hesitated for a moment. But he had not asked her to do this—had not dreamed of it, it seemed; and to run away alone and work for herself would be, Lily felt, to expose him to much animadversion as well as herself; and, most of all, it would betray fully to herself and to her uncle, with that sneer on his face, the certainty that Ronald would not risk having her without her money, that discovery which she held at arm’s-length and would not consent to make herself sure of. All these thoughts were tumultuous in her mind as she opened her eyes to the light of a new day. This was the final moment, the turning-point of her life. She thought at first when she woke that it was still the same misty moonlight on which she had shut her eyes, and that there must still be some hours between her and the day. But it was only an easterly haar with which the air was full—a state of atmosphere not unknown in Edinburgh, and which wraps the landscape in a blinding shroud as of white wool, obliterating every feature in a place which has so many. Arthur’s Seat and Salisbury Craigs and the Castle Rock had all disappeared in it from those who were in a position to see them; and here, in George Square, even the brown houses opposite had gone out of sight, and the trees in the garden loomed dimly like ghosts, a branch thrust out here and there. Lily asked herself, was it still night? And then her mind awoke to a state of the atmosphere not at all unusual, and a sense that the moment of her fate had arrived, and that every thing must be settled for her for good or for evil this day.

She was very quiet, and said scarcely any thing even to Robina, who dressed her young mistress with the greatest care, bringing out a dress of which Sir Robert had expressed his approval, without consulting Lily, who indeed paid little attention to this important matter. Considering the visions of poverty and independence that ran in her mind, it was wonderful how peaceably she resigned herself to Robina’s administration. Sometimes, when a fit of that independence seized her, she would push Robina away and do every thing for herself. Beenie much exaggerated the misfortunes of the result in such moments. “Her hair just a’ come down tumbling about her shoulders in five minutes,” she said, which was not true: though Lily did not deny that she was not equal to the elaborate braids which were in fashion at the moment, and could not herself plait her hair in any thing more than three strands, while Beenie was capable of seven, or any number more.

But to-day she was quite passive, and took no interest in her appearance. Her hair was dressed in a sort of coronet, which was a mode only used on grand occasions. Ordinarily it was spread over the back of the head in woven coils and circles. There was not any thing extraordinary in Lily's beauty. It was the beauty of youth and freshness and health, a good complexion, good eyes, and features not much to speak of. People did not follow her through the streets, nor stand aside to make way for her when she entered a room. In Edinburgh there were hundreds as pretty as she; and yet, when all was said, she was a pretty creature, good enough and fair enough to be a delight and pride to any one who loved her. She had innumerable faults, but she was all the sweeter for them, and impulses of temper, swift wrath, and indignation, and impatience, which proved her to be any thing but perfect. Sometimes she would take you up at a word and misinterpret you altogether. In all things she was apt to be too quick, to run away with a meaning before you, if you were of slow movement, had got it half expressed. And this and many other things about her were highly provoking, and called forth answering impatience from others. But for all this she was a very lovable, and, as other girls said, nice, girl. She raised no jealousies; she entertained no spites. She was always natural and spontaneous, and did nothing from calculation, not even so much as the putting on of a dress. It did not occur to her even to think, to enquire whether she was looking her best when the hour had come at which she was to go to Sir Robert. Robina took her by the shoulders and turned her slowly round before the glass; but Lily did not know why. She gave her faithful servant a faint smile over her own shoulder in the mirror, but it did not enter into her mind that it was expedient to look her best when she went down stairs to her uncle. If any one had put it into words, she would have asked, what did he care? Would he so much as notice her dress? It was ridiculous to think of such a thing—an old man like Sir Robert, with his head full of different matters. Thus, without any thought on that subject, she went slowly down stairs—not flying, as was her wont—very sedately, as if she were counting every step; for was it not her fate and Ronald's which was to be settled to-day?

CHAPTER III

“So you are there, Lily,” Sir Robert said.

“Yes, uncle, I am here.”

“There is one thing about you,” he said, with a laugh: “you never shirk. Now judicious shirking is not a bad thing. I might have forgotten all about it—”

“But I couldn’t forget,” said Lily firmly. These words, however, roused her to sudden self-reproach. If she had not been so exact, perhaps the crisis might have been tided over and nothing happened. It was just like her! Supposing her little affairs were of more importance than any thing else in the world! This roused her from the half-passive condition in which she had spent the morning, the feeling that every thing depended on her uncle, and nothing on herself.

“Now that you are here,” he said, not at all unkindly, “you may as well sit down. While you stand there I feel that you have come to scold me for some fault of mine, which is a reversal of the just position, don’t you think?”

“No, uncle,” replied Lily, “of course I have not come to scold you—that would be ridiculous; but I am not come to be scolded either, for I have not done any thing wrong.”

“We’ll come to that presently. Sit down, sit down,” he said with impatience. Lily placed herself on the chair he pushed toward her, and then there was a moment’s silence. Sir Robert was an old man (in Lily’s opinion) and she was a young girl, but they were antagonists not badly matched, and he had a certain respect for the pluck and firmness of this little person who was not afraid of him. They were indeed so evenly matched that there ensued a little pause as they both looked at each other in the milky-white daylight, full of mist and cold, which filled the great windows. Sir Robert had a fire, though fires had been given up in the house. It burned with a little red point, sultry and smouldering, as fires have a way of doing in summer. The room was large and sombre, with pale green walls hung with some full-length portraits, the furniture all large, heavy, and dark. A white bust of himself stood stern upon a black pedestal in a corner—so white that amid all the sober lines of the room it caught the eye constantly. And Sir Robert was not a handsome man. His features were blunt and his air homely; his head was not adapted for marble. In that hard material it looked frowning, severe, and merciless. The bust had lived in this room longer than Sir Robert had done, and Lily had derived her first impressions of him from its unyielding face. The irregularities of the real countenance leaned to humor and a shrewdness which was not unkindly; but there was no relenting in the marble head.

“Well,” he said at last, “now we’ve met to have it out, Lily. You take me at my word, and it is best so. How old are you now?”

“I don’t see,” said Lily breathlessly, “what that can have to do with it, uncle! but I’m twenty-two—or at least I shall be on the 20th of August, and that is not far away.”

“No, it is not far away. Twenty-two—and I am—well, sixty-two, we may say, with allowances. That is a great difference between people that meet to discuss an important question—on quite an equal footing, Lily, as you suppose.”

“I never pretended—to be your equal, uncle!”

“No, I don’t suppose so—not in words, not in experience, and such like—but in intention and all that, and in knowing what suits yourself.”

Lily made no reply, but she looked at him—silent, not yielding, tapping her foot unconsciously on the carpet, nervous, yet firm, not disposed to give way a jot, though she recognized a certain truth in what he said.

“This gives you, you must see, a certain advantage to begin with,” said Sir Robert, “for you are firmly fixed upon one thing, whatever I say or any one, and determined not to budge from your position; whereas I am quite willing to hear reason, if there is any reason to show.”

"Uncle!" Lily said, and then closed her lips and returned to her silence. It was hard for her to keep silent with her disposition, and yet she suddenly perceived, with one of those flashes of understanding which sometimes came to her, that silence could not be controverted, whereas words under Sir Robert's skilful attack would probably topple over at once, like a house of cards.

"Well?" he said. While she, poor child, was panting and breathless, he was quite cool and collected. At present he rather enjoyed the sight of the little thing's tricks and devices, and was amused to watch how far her natural skill, and that intuitive cunning which such a man believes every woman to possess, would carry her. He was a little provoked that she did not follow that impetuous exclamation "Uncle!" with any thing more.

"Well," he repeated, wooing her, as he hoped, to destruction, "what more? Unless you state your case how am I to find out whether there is any justice in it or not?"

"Uncle," said Lily, "I did not come to state my case, which would not become me. I came because you objected to me, to hear what you wanted me to do."

"By Jove!" said Sir Robert, with a laugh; and then he added, "To be so young you are a very cool hand, my dear."

"How am I a cool hand? I am not cool at all. I am very anxious. It does not matter much to you, Uncle Robert, what you do with me; but," said Lily, tears springing to her eyes, "it will matter a great deal to me."

"You little—" He could not find an epithet that suited, so left the adjective by itself, in sheer disability to express himself. He would have said hussy had he been an Englishman. He was tempted to say cutty, being a Scot—innocent epithets enough, both, but sufficient to make that little—flare up. "You mean," he said, "I suppose, that you have nothing to do with it, and that the whole affair is in my hands."

"Yes, uncle, I think it is," said Lily very sedately.

He looked at her again with another ejaculation on his lips, and then he laughed.

"Well, my dear," he said, "if that is the case, we can make short work of it—as you are in such a submissive frame of mind and have no will or intentions on your own part."

Here Lily's impatient spirit got the better of the hasty impulse of policy which she had taken up by sudden inspiration. "I never said that!" she cried.

"Then you will be so good as to explain to me what you did say, or rather what you meant, which is more important still," Sir Robert said.

"I meant—just what I have always meant," said Lily, drawing back her chair a little and fixing her eyes upon her foot, which beat the floor with a nervous movement.

"And what is that?" he asked.

Lily drew back a little more, her foot ceased to tap, her hands clasped each other. She looked up into his face with half-reproachful eyes full of meaning. "Oh, Uncle Robert, you know!"

Sir Robert jumped up from his chair, and then sat down again. Demonstrations of wrath were of no use. He felt inclined to cry, "You little cutty!" again, but did not. He puffed out a quick breath, which was a sign of great impatience, yet self-repression. "You mean, I suppose, that things are exactly as they were—that you mean to pay no attention to my representations, that you choose your own will above mine—notwithstanding that I have complete power over you, and can do with you what I will?"

"Nobody can do that," said Lily, only half aloud. "I am not a doll," she said, "Uncle Robert. You have the power—so that I don't like to disobey you."

"But do it all the same!" he cried.

"Not if I can help it. I would like to do it. I would like to be independent. It seems dreadful that one should be obliged to do, not what one wishes, but what another person wills. But you have the power—"

"Of the ways and means," he said; "I have the purse-strings in my hand."

It was Lily's turn now to start to her feet. "Oh, how mean of you, how base of you!" she said. "You, a great man and a soldier, and me only a girl. To threaten me with your purse-strings! As if I cared for your purse-strings. Give it all away from me; give it all—that's what I should like best. I will go away with Beenie, and we'll sew, or do something else for our living. I'm very fond of poultry—I could be a henwife; or there are many other things that I could do. Give it all away! Tie them up tight. I just hate your money and your purse-strings. I wish they were all at the bottom of the sea!"

"You would find things very different if they were, I can tell you," he said, with a snort.

"Oh, yes, very different. I would be free. I would take my own way. I would have nobody to tyrannize over me. Oh, uncle! forgive me! forgive me! I did not mean to say that! If you were poor, I would take care of you. I would remember you were next to my father, and I would do any thing you could say."

He kept his eyes fixed on her as she stood thus, defiant yet compunctious, before him. "I don't doubt for a moment you would do every thing that was most senseless and imprudent," he said.

Then Lily dropped into her chair and cried a little—partly that she could not help it, partly that it was a weapon of war like another—and gained a little time. But Sir Robert was not moved by her crying; she had not, indeed, expected that he would be.

"I don't see what all this has to do with it," he said. "Consider this passage of arms over, and let us get to business, Lily. It was necessary there should be a flash in the pan to begin."

Lily dried her eyes; she set her little mouth much as Sir Robert set his, and then said in a small voice: "I am quite ready, Uncle Robert," looking not unlike the bust as she did so. He did not look at all like the bust, for there was a great deal of humor in his face. He thought he saw through all this little flash in the pan, and that it had been intended from the beginning as a preface of operations and by way of subduing him to her will. In all of which he was quite wrong.

"I am glad to hear it, Lily. Now I want you to be reasonable: the thunder is over and the air is clearer. You want to marry a man of whom I don't approve."

"One word," she said with great dignity. "I am wanting to marry—nobody. There is plenty of time."

"I accept the correction. You want to carry on a love affair which you prefer at this moment. It is more fun than marrying, and in that way you get all the advantages I can give you, and the advantage of a lover's attentions into the bargain. I congratulate you, my dear, on making the best, as the preacher says, of both worlds."

Lily flushed and clasped her hands together, and there came from her expanded nostrils what in Sir Robert's case we have called a snort of passion. Lily's nostrils were small and pretty and delicate. This was a puff of heated breath, and no more.

"Eh?" he said; but she mastered herself and said nothing, which made it more difficult for him to go on. Finally, however, he resumed.

"You think," he said, "that it will be more difficult for me to restrain you if you or your lover have no immediate intention of marrying. And probably he—for I do him the justice to say he is a very acute fellow—sees the advantage of that. But it will not do for me. I must have certainty one way or another. I am not going to give the comfort of my life over into your silly hands. No, I don't even say that you are sillier than most of your age—on the contrary; but I don't mean," he added deliberately, "to put my peace of mind into your hands. You will give me your word to give up the lad Lumsden, or else you will pack off without another word to Dalrugus. It is a comfortable house, and Dougal and his wife will be very attentive to you. What's in a locality? George Square is pleasant enough, but it's prose of the deepest dye for a lady in love. You'll find nothing but poetry on my moor. Poetry," he added, with a laugh, "sonnets such as you will rarely match, and moonlight nights, and all the rest of it; just the very thing for a lovelorn maiden: but very little else, I allow. And what do you want more? Plenty of time to think upon the happy man."

His laugh was fiendish, Lily thought, who held herself with both her hands to keep still and to retain command of herself. She made no answer, though the self-restraint was almost more than she could bear.

"Well," he said, after a pause, "is this what you are going to decide upon? There is something to balance all these advantages. While you are thinking of him he will probably *not* return the compliment. Out of sight, out of mind. He will most likely find another Lily not so closely guarded as you, and while you are out of the way he will transfer his attention to her. It will be quite natural. There are few men in the world that would not do the same. And while you are gazing over the moor, thinking of him, he will be taking the usual means to indemnify himself and forget you."

"I am not afraid," said Lily tersely.

"Oh, you are not afraid? It's little you know of men, my dear. Lumsden's a clever, ambitious young fellow. He perhaps believes he's fond of you. He is fond of any thing that will help him on in the world and give him what he wants—which is a helping hand in life, and ease of mind, and money to tide him over till he makes himself known. Oh, he'll succeed in the end, there is little doubt of that; but he shall not succeed at my expense. Now, Lily, do not sit and glare, like a waxen image, but give me an answer like a sensible girl, as you can be if you like. Will you throw away your happy life, and society and variety and pleasure, and your balls and parties, all for the sake of a man that the moment your back is turned will think no more of you?"

"Uncle," said Lily, clearing her throat. But she could not raise her voice, which extreme irritation, indignation, and the strong effort of self-restraint seemed to have stifled. She made an effort, but produced nothing but a hoarse repetition of his name.

"I hope I have touched you," he said. "Come, my dear, be a sensible lassie, and be sure I am speaking for your good. There are more fish in the sea than ever came out in a net. I will find you a better man than Lumsden, and one with a good house to take you home to, and not a penniless—"

"Stop!" she cried, with an angry gesture. "Stop! Do you think I am wanting a man? Me! Just any man, perhaps, you think, no matter who? Oh, if I were only a laddie instead of a useless girl you would never, never dare, great man as you are, to speak like that to me!"

"Certainly I should not," he said, with a laugh, "for you would have more sense, and would not think any woman was worth going into exile for. But, girl as you are, Lily, the choice is in your own hands. You can have, not love in a cottage, but love on a moor, which soon will be unrequited love, and that, we all know, is the most tragic and interesting of all."

"Uncle," said Lily, slowly recovering herself, "do you think it is a fine thing for a man like you, a grand gentleman, and old, and that knows every thing, to make a jest and a mockery of one that is young like me, and has no words to make reply? Is it a joke to think of me breaking my heart, as you say, among all the bonnie sunsets and the moonlight nights and the lonely, lonely moor? I may have to do it if it's your will; but it's not for the like of you, that have your freedom and can do what you choose, to make a mock at those that are helpless like me."

"Helpless!" he said. "Nothing of the sort; it is all in your own hands."

And then there was again a pause. He thought she was making up her mind to submit to his will. And she was bursting with the effort to contain herself, and all her indignation and wrath. Her pride would not let her burst forth into cries and tears, but it was with the greatest watchfulness upon herself that she kept in these wild expressions of emotion, and the hot refusals that pressed to her lips—refusals to obey him, to be silenced by him, to be sentenced to unnatural confinement and banishment and dreary exile. Why should one human creature have such power of life and death over another? Her whole being revolted in a passion of restrained impatience and rage and fear.

"Well," he said lightly, "which is it to be? Don't trifle with your own comfort, Lily. Just give me the answer that you will see no more of young Lumsden. Give him no more encouragement; think of him no more. That is all I ask. Only give me your promise—I put faith in you. Think of him no more; that is all I ask."

“All you ask—only that!” said Lily in her fury. “Only that! Oh, it’s not much, is it? not much—only that!” She laughed, too, with a sort of echo of his laugh; but somehow he did not find it to his mind.

“That is all,” he said gravely; “and I don’t think that it is very much to ask, considering that you owe every thing to me.”

“It would have been better for me if I had owed you nothing, uncle,” said Lily. “Why did you ever take any heed of me? I would have been earning my own bread and had my freedom and lived my own life if you had left me as I was.”

“This is what one gets,” he said, as if to himself, with a smile, “for taking care of other people’s children. But we need not fall into general reflections, nor yet into recriminations. I would probably not do it again if I had it to do a second time; but the thing I want from you at the present moment is merely a yes or no.”

“No!” Lily said almost inaudibly; but her tightly closed lips, her resolute face, said it for her without need of any sound.

“No?” he repeated, half incredulous; then, with a nod, flinging back his head: “Well, my dear, you must have your wilful way. Dalrugas will daily be growing bonnier and bonnier at this season of the year; and to-morrow you will get ready to go away.”

CHAPTER IV

"I have been a fool," said Lily. "I have not said any thing that I meant to say. I had a great many good reasons all ready, and I did not say one of them. I just said silly things. He played upon me like a fiddle; he made me so angry I could not endure myself, and then I had either to hold my tongue or say things that were silly and that I ought not to have said."

"Oh, dear me, dear me," cried Robina, "I just thought you would do that. If I had only been behind the door to give ye a look, Miss Lily. Ye are too impetuous when you are left to yourself."

"I was not impetuous; I was just silly," Lily said. "He provoked me till I did not know what I was saying, and then I held my tongue at the wrong places. But it would just have come to the same whatever I had said. He'll not yield, and I'll not yield, and what can we do but clash? We're to start off for Dalrugus to-morrow, and that's all that we have to think of now."

"Oh, Miss Lily!" cried Robina. She wrung her hands, and, with a look of awe, added: "It's like thae poor Poles in 'Elizabeth' going off in chains to that place they call Siberée, where there's nothing but snow and ice and wild, wild forests. Oh, my bonnie lamb! I mind the woods up yonder where it's dark i' the mid of day. And are ye to be banished there, you that are just in your bloom, and every body at your feet? Oh, Miss Lily, it canna be, it canna be!"

"It will have to be," said Lily resolutely, "and we must make the best of it. Take all the working things you can think of; I've been idle, and spent my time in nothings. I'll learn all your bonnie lace stitches, Beenie, and how to make things and embroideries, like Mary, Queen of Scots. We'll be two prisoners, and Dougal will turn the key on us every night, and we'll make friends with somebody like Roland, the page, that will make false keys and let us down from the window, with horses waiting; and then we'll career across the country in the dead of night, and folk will take us for ghosts; and then—we'll maybe ride on broomsticks, and fly up to the moon!" cried Lily, with a burst of laughter, which ended in a torrent of tears.

"Oh, my bonnie dear! oh, my lamb!" cried Beenie, taking the girl's head upon her ample breast. It is not to be imagined that these were hysterics, though hysterics were the fashion of the time, and the young ladies of the day indulged in them freely at any contrariety. Lily was over-excited and worn out, and she had broken down for the moment. But in a few minutes she had raised her head, pushed Beenie away, and got up with bright eyes to meet her fate.

"Take books too," she cried, "as many as you can, and perhaps he'll let us keep our subscription to the library, and they can send us things by the coach. And take all my pencils and my colors. I'll maybe turn into a great artist on the moors that Uncle Robert says are so bonnie. He went on about his sunsets and his moonlights till he nearly drove me mad," cried Lily, "mocking! Oh, Beenie, what hard hearts they have, these old men!"

"I would just like," cried the faithful maid, "to have twa-three words with him. Oh, I should like to have twa-three words with him, just him and me by our twa sels!"

"And much good that would do! He would just turn you outside in with his little finger," said Lily in high scorn. But naturally Robina was not of that opinion. She was ready to go to the stake for her mistress, and facing Sir Robert in his den was not a bad version of going to the stake. It might procure her instant dismissal for any thing Beenie knew; he might tell old Haygate, the old soldier-servant, who was now his butler, and an Englishman, consequently devoid of sympathy, to put her to the door; anyhow, he would scathe her with satirical words and that look which even Lily interpreted as mocking, and which is the most difficult of all things to bear. But Beenie had a great confidence that there were "twa-three things" that nobody could press upon Sir Robert's attention but herself. She thought of it during the morning hours to the exclusion of every thing else, and finally after luncheon was over, when Lily was occupied with some youthful visitors, Beenie, with a beating heart, put her plan into execution. Haygate was out of the way, too, the Lord be praised. He had started out

upon some mission connected with the wine-cellar; and Thomas, the footman, was indigenous, had been Tommy to Robina from his boyhood, and was so, she said, like a boy of her own. He would never put her to the door, whatever Sir Robert might say. She went down accordingly to the dining-room, after the master of the house had enjoyed his good lunch and his moment of somnolence after it (which he would not for the world have admitted to be a nap), and tapped lightly, tremulously, with all her nerves in a twitter, at the door. To describe what was in Beenie's heart when she opened it in obedience to his call to come in was more than words are capable of: it was like going to the stake.

"Oh, Beenie! so it is you," the master said.

"Deed, it's just me, Sir Robert. I thought if I might say a word—"

"Oh, say a dozen words if you like; but, mind, I am going out, and I have no time for more."

"Yes, Sir Robert." Beenie came inside the door, and closed it softly after her. She then took up the black silk apron which she wore, denoting her rank as lady's maid, to give her a countenance, and made an imaginary frill upon it with her hands. "I just thought," she said, with her head bent and her eyes fixed on this useful occupation, "that I would like to say twa-three words about Miss Lily, Sir Robert—"

"Oh," he said, "and what might you have to say about Miss Lily? You should know more about her, it is true, than any of us. Has she sent you to say that she has recovered her senses, and is going to behave like a girl of sense, as I always took her to be?"

Beenie raised her eyes from her fantastic occupation, and looked at Sir Robert. She shook her head. She formed her lips into a round "No," pushing them forth to emphasize the syllable. "Eh, Sir Robert," she said at last, "you're a clever man—you understand many a thing that's just Greek and Hebrew to the likes of us; but ye dinna understand a lassie's heart. How should ye?" said Beenie, compassionately shaking her head again.

Sir Robert's luncheon had been good; he had enjoyed his nap; he was altogether in a good humor. "Well," he said, "if you can enlighten me on that point, Beenie, fire away!"

"Weel, Sir Robert, do ye no think you're just forcing her more and more into it, to make her suffer for her lad, and to have nothing to do but think upon him and weary for him away yonder on yon solitary moor? Eh, it's like driving her to the wilderness, or away to Siberée, that awfu' place where they send the Poles, as ye will read in 'Elizabeth,' to make them forget their country, and where they just learn to think upon it more and more. Eh, Sir Robert, we're awfu' perverse in that way! I would have praised him up to her, and said there was no man like him in the world. I would have said he was just the one that cared nothing for siller, that would have taken her in her shift—begging your pardon for sic a common word; I would have hurried her on to fix the day, and made every thing as smooth as velvet; and then just as keen as she is for it now I would have looked to see her against it then."

"I allow," said Sir Robert, with a laugh, "that you have a cloud of witnesses on your side; but I am not quite sure that I put faith in them. If I were to hurry her on to fix the day, as you say, I would get rid, no doubt, of the trouble; but I am much afraid that Lily, instead of starting off on the other tack, would take me at my word."

"Sir," said Beenie in a lowered voice, coming a step nearer, "if we were to leave it to him to show her the contrary, it would be more effectual than any thing you could say."

"So," said Sir Robert, with a long whistle of surprise, "you trust him no more than I do? I always thought you were a woman of sense."

"I am saying nothing about that, Sir Robert," Beenie replied.

"But don't ye see, you silly woman, that he would take my favor for granted in that case, and would not show her to the contrary, but would marry her in as great haste as we liked, feeling sure that I had committed myself, and would not then draw back?"

"He would do ye nae justice, Sir Robert, if he thought that."

“What do you mean, you libellous person? You think I would encourage her in her folly in the hope of changing her mind, and then deceive and abandon her when she had followed my advice? No,” he said, “I am not so bad as that.”

“You should ken best, Sir Robert,” said Beenie, “but for me, I would not say. But if ye will just permit me one more word. Here she has plenty of things to think of: her parties and her dress, and her friends and her other partners—there’s three young leddies up the stair at this moment talking a’ the nonsense that comes into their heads—but there she would have no person—”

“Not a soul, except Dougal and his wife,” said Sir Robert, with a chuckle.

“And nothing to think of but just—him. Oh, Sir Robert, think what ye are driving the bairn to! No diversions and no distractions, but just to think upon him night and day. There’s things she finds to object to in him when he’s by her side—just like you and me. But when she’s there she’ll think and think upon him till she makes him out to be an angel o’ light. He will just get to be the only person in the world. He will write to her—”

“That he shall not do! Dougal shall have orders to stop every letter.”

Beenie smiled a calm, superior smile. “And ye think Dougal—or any man in the world—can keep a lad and lass from communication. Eh, Sir Robert, you’re a clever man! but just as ignorant, as ignorant as any bairn.”

Sir Robert was much amused, but he began to get a little impatient. “If they can find means of communicating in spite of the solitude and the miles of moor and Dougal, then I really think they will deserve to be permitted to ruin all their prospects,” he said.

“Sir Robert!”

“No more,” he said. “I have already heard you with great patience, Beenie. I don’t think you have thrown any new light on the subject. Go and pack your boxes; for the coach starts early to-morrow, and you should have every thing ready both for her and yourself to-night.”

Beenie turned away to the door, and then she turned round again. She stood pinching the imaginary frill on her apron, with her head held on one side, as if to judge the effect. “Will that be your last word, Sir Robert?” she said. “She’s your brother’s bairn, and the only one in the family—and a tender bit thing, no used to unkindness, nor to be left all her lane as if there was naeboddy left in the world. Oh, think upon the bit thing sent into the wilderness! It is prophets and great men that are sent there in the way of Providence, and no a slip of a lassie. Oh, Sir Robert, think again! that’s no your last word?”

“Would you like me to ring for Haygate and have you turned out of the house? If you stay another minute, that will be my last word.”

“Na,” said Beenie, “Haygate’s out, Sir Robert, and Tommy’s not the lad—”

“Will you go, you vixen?” Sir Robert shouted at the top of his voice.

“I’ll go, since I cannot help it; but if it comes to harm, oh, Sir Robert! afore God the wyte will be on your head.”

Beenie dried her eyes as she went sorrowfully upstairs. “The wyte will be on his head; but, oh, the sufferin’ and the sorrow that will be on hers!” Beenie said to herself.

But it was evident there was no more to be said. As she went slowly upstairs with a melancholy countenance, she met at the door of the drawing-room the three young ladies who had been—according to her own description—“talking a’ the nonsense that came into their heads,” with Lily in the midst, who was taking leave of them. “Oh, there is Robina,” they all cried out together. “Beenie will tell us what it means. What is the meaning of it all? She says she is going away. Beenie, Beenie, explain this moment! What does she mean about going away?”

“Eh, my bonnie misses,” cried Beenie, “who am I that I should explain my mistress’s dark sayings? I am just a servant, and ken nothing but what’s said to me by the higher powers.”

There was what Beenie afterward explained as “a cackle o’ laughing” over these words, which were just like Beenie, the girls said. “But what do you know from the higher powers? And why, why

is Lily to be snatched away?" they said. Robina softly pushed her way through them with the superior weight of her bigness. "Ye must just ask herself, for it is beyond me," she said.

Lily rushed after her as soon as the visitors were gone, pale with expectation. "Oh, Beenie, what did he say?" she cried.

"What did who say, Miss Lily? for I do not catch your meaning," said the faithful maid.

"Do you mean to say that you did not go down stairs—"

"Yes, Miss Lily, I went down the stairs."

"To see my uncle?" said the girl. "I know you saw my uncle. I heard your voice murmuring, though they all talked at once. Oh, Beenie, Beenie, what did he say?"

"Since you will have it, Miss Lily, I did just see Sir Robert. There was nobody but me in the way, and I saw your uncle. He was in a very good key after that grand dish of Scots collops. So I thought I would just ask him if it was true."

"And what did he say?"

Beenie shook her head and said, "No," in dumb show with her pursed-out lips. "He just said it was your own doing, and not his," she added, after this impressive pantomime.

"Oh, how did he dare to say so! It was none of my doing—how could he say it was my doing? Was I likely to want to be banished away to Dalrugas moor, and never see a living soul?"

"He said you wouldna yield, and he wouldna yield; and in that case, Miss Lily, I ask you what could the like of me do?"

"I would not yield," said Lily. "Oh, what a story! what a story! What have I got to yield? It was just him, him, his own self, and nobody else. He thinks more of his own will than of all the world."

"He said you would not give up your love—I am meaning young Mr. Lumsden—no, for any thing he could say."

"And what would I give him up for?" cried Lily, changing in a moment from pale to red. "What do I ever see of Sir Robert, Beenie? He's not up in the morning, and he's late at night. I have heard you say yourself about that club— I see him at his lunch, and that's all, and how can you talk and make great friends when your mouth is full, and him so pleased with a good dish and angry when it's not to his mind? Would I give up Ronald, that is all I have, for Sir Robert with his mouth full? And how does he dare to ask me—him that will not do a thing for me?"

"That is just it," said Beenie, shaking her head; "you think a' the reason's on your side, and he thinks a' the reason is on his; and he'll have his own gate and you'll have your will, and there is no telling what is to be done between you. Oh, Miss Lily, my bonnie dear, you are but a young thing. It's more reasonable Sir Robert should have his will than you. He's gone through a great deal of fighting and battles and troubles, and what have you ever gone through but the measles and the king-cough, that couldna be helped? It's mair becoming that you should yield to him than he should yield to you."

"And am I not yielding to him?" said Lily. "I just do whatever he tells me. If he says, 'You are to come out with me to dinner,' though I know how wearisome it will be, and though I had the nicest party in the world and all my own friends, I just give in to him without a word. I wear that yellow gown he gave me, though it's terrible to behold, just to please him. I sit and listen to all his old gentlemen grumbling, and to him paying his compliments to all his old ladies, and never laugh. Oh, Beenie, if you could hear him!" and here Lily burst into the laugh which she had previously denied herself. "But when he comes and tells me to give up Ronald for the sake of his nasty, filthy siller—"

"Miss Lily, that's no Mr. Ronald's opinion."

"Oh!" cried Lily, stamping her foot upon the ground, while hot tears rushed to her eyes, "as if that did not make it a hundred times worse!" she cried.

And then there was a pause, and Beenie, with great deliberation, began to take out a pile of dresses from the wardrobe, which she opened out and folded one after another, patting them with her plump hands upon the bed. Lily watched her for some moments in silence, and then she said with a faltering voice: "Do you really think, then, that there is no hope?"

Robina answered in her usual way, pursing out her lips to form the “No” which she did not utter audibly. “Unless you will yield,” she said.

“Yield—to give up Ronald? To meet him and never speak to him? To let him think I’m a false woman, and mansworn? I will never do that,” Lily said.

“But you’ll no marry him, my lamb, without your uncle’s consent?”

“He’ll not ask me!” cried Lily, desperate. “Why do you torment me when you know that is just the worst of all? Oh, if he would try me! And who is wanting to marry him—or any man? Certainly not me!”

“If you were to give your uncle your word—if you were to say, ‘We’ll just meet at kirk and market and say good-even and good-morrow,’ but nae mair. Oh, Miss Lily, that is not much to yield to an old man.”

“I said as good as that, but he made no answer. Beenie, pack up the things and let us go quietly away, for there is no help for us in any man.”

“A’ the same, if I were you, I would try,” said Robina, taking the last word.

Lily said nothing in reply; but that night, when she was returning with Sir Robert from a solemn party to which she had accompanied him, she made in the darkness some faltering essay at submission. “I would have to speak to him when we meet,” she said, “and I would have to tell him there was to be no more—for the present. And I would not take any step without asking you, Uncle Robert.”

Sir Robert nearly sprang from his carriage in indignation at this halting obedience. “If you call that giving up your will to mine, I don’t call it so!” he cried. “Tell him there is to be no more—for the present! That is a bonnie kind of submission to me, that will have none of him at all.”

“It is all I can give,” said Lily with spirit, drawing into her own corner of the carriage. Her heart was very full, but not to save her life could she have said more.

“Very well,” said Sir Robert; “Haygate has his orders, and will see you off to-morrow. Mind you are in good time, for a coach will wait for no man, nor woman either; and I’ll bid you good-by now and a better disposition to you, and a good journey. Good-night.”

And at seven o’clock next morning, in the freshness of the new day, the North mail sure enough carried Lily and Robina away.

CHAPTER V

A highland moor is in itself a beautiful thing. When it is in full bloom of purple heather, with all those breaks and edges of emerald green which betray the bog below, with the sweet-scented gale sending forth its odor as it is crushed underfoot, and the yellow gorse rising in broken lines of gold, and here and there a half-grown rowan, with its red berries, and here and there a gleam of clear dark water, nothing can be more full of variety and the charm of wild and abounding life. But when the sky is gray and the weather bleak, and the heather is still in the green, or dry with the gray and rustling husks of last year's bloom; when there is little color, and none of those effects of light and shade which make a drama of shifting interest upon the Highland hills and lochs, all this is very different, and the long sweep of wild and broken ground, under a low and dark sky, becomes an image of desolation instead of the fresh and blooming and fragrant moor of early autumn. Dalrugus was a tall, pinched house, with a high gable cut in those rectangular lines which are called crow steps in Scotland, rising straight up from the edge of the moor. The height and form of this gave a parsimonious and niggardly look—though the rooms were by no means contemptible within—which was increased by the small windows pierced high up in the wall. There was no garden on that side, not so much as the little plot to which even a cottage has a right. Embedded within the high, sharp-cornered walls behind was a kitchen-garden or kale-yard, where the commonest vegetables were grown with a border of gooseberries and a few plants of sweet-william and applingie; but this was not visible to give any softness to the prospect. The heather came up uncompromisingly, with a little hillock of green turf here and there, to the very walls, which had once been whitewashed, and still in their forlorn dinginess lent a little variety to the landscape; but this did but add to the cold, pinched, and resistant character of the house. It looked like a prim ancient lady, very spare, and holding her skirts close round her in the pride of penury and evil fortune. The door was in the outstanding gable, and admitted directly into a low passage from which a spiral stair mounted to the rooms above. On the ground-floor there was a low, dark-pannelled dining-room and library full of ancient books, but these rooms were used only when Sir Robert came for shooting, which happened very rarely. The drawing-room upstairs was bare also, but yet had some lingerings of old-fashioned grace. From the small, deep-set, high windows there was a wide, unbroken view over the moor. The moor stretched everywhere, miles of it, gray as the low sky which hung over it, a canopy of clouds. The only relief was a bush of gorse here and there half in blossom, for the gorse is never wholly out of blossom, as every-body knows, and the dark gleam of the water in a cutting, black as the bog which it was meant to drain. The dreary moorland road which skirted the edge passed in front of the house, but was only visible from these windows at a corner, where it emerged for a moment from a group of blighted firs before disappearing between the banks of heather and whin, which had been cut to give it passage. This was the only relief from the monotony of the moor.

It was in this house that Lily and her maid arrived after a journey which had not been so uncheerful as they anticipated. A journey by stage-coach through a beautiful country can scarcely be dreary in the worst of circumstances. The arrivals, the changes, the villages and towns passed through, the contact with one's fellow-creatures which is inevitable, shake off more or less the most sullen discontent; and Lily was not sullen, while Beenie was one of the most open-hearted of human creatures, ready to interest herself in every one she met, and to talk to them and give her advice upon their circumstances. The pair met all sorts of people on their journey, and they made almost as many friendships, and thus partially forgot the penitential object of their own travels, and that they were being sent off to the ends of the earth.

It was only when "the gig" met them at the village, where the coach stopped on its northern route, that their destination began to oppress either the mistress or the maid. This was on the afternoon of a day which had been partially bright and partially wet, the best development of weather to be

hoped for in the North. The village was a small collection of cottages, partly with tiled roofs, making a welcome gleam of color, but subdued by a number of those respectable stone houses with blue tiles, which were and are the ideal of comfortable sobriety, which, in defiance of all the necessities of the landscape, the Scotch middle class has unfortunately fixed upon. The church stood in the midst—a respectable oblong barn, with a sort of long extinguisher in the shape of a steeple attached to it. On the outskirts the cottages became less comfortable and more picturesque, thatched, and covered with lichens. It was a well-to-do village. The “merchant,” as he was called, *i. e.*, the keeper of the “general” shop, was a Lowland Scot, very contemptuous of “thae Highlanders,” and there was a writer or solicitor in the place, and a doctor, besides the minister, who formed a little aristocracy. The English minister so called, that is, the Episcopalian, came occasionally—once in two or three Sundays—to officiate in a smaller barn, without any extinguisher, which held itself a little apart in a corner, not to mingle with the common people who did not possess Apostolical Succession; though, indeed, in those days there was little controversy, the Episcopalians being generally of that ritual by birth, and unpolemical, making no pretensions to superiority over the native Kirk.

The gig that met the travellers at Kinloch-Rugas was a tall vehicle on two wheels, which had once been painted yellow, but which was scarcely trim enough to represent that type of respectability which a certain young Thomas Carlyle, pursuing the vague trade of a literary man in Edinburgh, had declared it to be. It was followed closely by a rough cart, in which Beenie and the boxes were packed away. They were not large boxes. One, called “the hair trunk,” contained Lily’s every-day dresses, but no provision for any thing beyond the most ordinary needs, for there was no society nor any occasion for decorative garments on the moors. Beenie’s box was smaller, as became a serving-woman. These accessories were all in the fashion of their time, which was (like Waverley, yet, ah, so unlike!) sixty years since or thereabout—in the age before railways, or at least before they had penetrated to the distant portions of the country. The driver of the gig was a middle-aged countryman, very decent in a suit of gray “plaidin”—what we now call tweed—with a head of sandy hair grizzled and considerably blown about by the wind across the moor. His face was ruddy and wrinkled, of the color of a winter apple, in fine shades of red and brown, his shaggy eyebrows a little drawn together—by the “knitting of his brows under the glaring sun,” and the setting of his teeth against the breeze. He said, “Hey, Beenie!” as his salutation to the party before he doffed his bonnet to the young lady. Lily was not sure that it was quite respectful, but Dougal meant no disrespect. He was a little shy of her, being unfamiliar with her grown-up aspect, and reverential of her young ladyhood; but he was at his ease with Robina, who was a native of the parish, the daughter of the late blacksmith, and “weel connectit” among the rustic folk. It would have been an ease to Dougal to have had the maid beside him instead of the mistress, and it was to Beenie he addressed his first remarks over his shoulder, from pure shyness and want of confidence in his own powers of entertaining a lady. “Ye’ll have had a long journey,” he said. “The coach she’s aye late. She’s like a thriftless lass, Beenie, my woman. She just dallies, dallies at the first, and is like to break her neck at the end.”

“But she showed no desire to break her neck, I assure you,” said Lily. “She was in no hurry. We have just taken it very easy up hill and down dale.”

“Ay, ay!” he said, “we ken the ways o’ them.” With a glance over his shoulder: “Are you sure you’re weel happit up, Beenie, for there’s a cauld wind crossing the moor?”

“And how is Katrin, Dougal?” Lily asked, fastening her cloak up to her throat.

“Oh, she’s weel eneuch; you’ll see little differ since ye left us last. We’re a wee dried up with the peat-reck, and a wee blawn about by the wind. But ye’ll mind that fine, Beenie woman, and get used to’t like her and me.”

Lily laid impatient fingers on the reins, pulling Dougal’s hand, as if he had been the unsteady rough pony he drove. “Speak to me,” she said, “you rude person, and not to Beenie. Do you think I am nobody, or that I cannot understand?”

“Bless us all! No such a thought was in my head. Beenie, are ye sitting straight? for when the powny’s first started whiles he lets out.”

“Let me drive him!” Lily cried. “I’ll like it all the better if he lets out; and you can go behind if you like and talk to Beenie at your ease.”

“Na, na,” said Dougal, with a grin. “He kens wha’s driving him. A bit light hand like yours would have very sma’ effect upon Rory. Hey, laddies! get out of my powny’s way!”

Rory carried out the prognostics of his driver by tossing his shaggy head in the air, and making a dash forward, scattering the children who had gathered about to stare at the new arrivals; though before he got to the end of the village street he had settled into his steady pace, which was quite uninfluenced by any skill in driving on Dougal’s part, but was entirely the desire and meaning of that very characteristic member of society—himself. The day had settled into an afternoon serenity and unusual quietness of light. The mountains stood high in the even air, without any dramatic changes, Schehallion, with his conical crest, dominating the lesser hills, and wearing soberly his mantle of purple, subdued by gray. The road lay for a few miles through broken ground, diversified with clumps of wood, wind-blown firs, and beeches tossing their feathery branches in the air, crossing by a little bridge a brown and lively trout stream, which went brawling through the village, but afterward fell into deeper shadows, penetrating between close fir-woods, before it reached the edge of the moor, round which it ran its lonely way. Lily’s spirits began to rise. The sense of novelty, the pleasant feeling of arrival, and of all the possibilities which relieve the unknown, rose in her breast. Something would surely happen; something would certainly be found to make the exile less heavy, and to bring back a little hope. The little river greeted her like an old friend. “Oh, I remember the Rugas,” she cried. “What a cheery little water! Will they let me fish in it, Dougal? Look how it sparkles! I think it must remember me.”

“It’s just a natural objick,” said Dougal. “It minds naeboddy; and what would you do—a bit lady thing—fishing troot? Hoots! a crookit pin in a burn would set ye better, a little miss like you.”

In those days there were no ladies who were salmon fishers. Such a thing would have seemed to Dougal an outrage upon every law.

“Don’t be contemptuous,” said Lily, with a laugh. “You’ll find I am not at all a little miss. Just give me the reins and let me wake Rory up. I mean to ride him about the moor.”

“I’m doubting if you’ll do that,” said Dougal, with politeness, but reserve.

“Why shouldn’t I do it? Perhaps you think I don’t know how to ride. Oh, you can trust Rory to me, or a better than Rory.”

“There’s few better in these parts,” said Dougal with some solemnity. “He’s a beast that has a great deal of judgment. He kens well what’s his duty in this life. I’m no thinking you’ll find it that easy to put him to a new kind of work. He has plenty of his ain work to do.”

“We’ll see about that,” said Lily.

“Ah,” replied Dougal cautiously, “we’ll just see about that. We must na come to any hasty judgment. Cheer up, lad! Yon’s the half of the road.”

“Is this only the half of the road?” said Lily, with a shudder. They were coming out of the deep shade of the woods, and now before them, in its full width and silence, stretched the long levels of the moor. It was even now, in these days before the heather, a beautiful sight, with the mountains towering in the background, and the bushes of the ling, which later in the year would be glorious with blossoms, coming down, mingled with the feathery plumes of the seeding grass, to the very edge of the road: beautiful, wild, alive with sounds of insects, and that thrill of the air which we call silence—silence that could be heard. The wide space, the boundless sky, the freedom of the pure air, gave a certain exaltation to Lily’s soul, but at the same time overwhelmed her with a sense of the great loneliness and separation from all human interests which this great vacancy made. “Only half-way,” she repeated, with a gasp.

“It’s a gey lang road, but it’s a very good road, with few bad bits. An accustomed person need have nae fear by night or day. There was an ill place, where ye cross the Rugas again, at the head of the Black Scaur; but it’s been mended up just uncommon careful, and ye need have nae apprehension; besides that, there’s me that ken every step, and Rory that is maist as clever as me.”

“But it’s the end of the world,” Lily said.

“No that, nor even the end of the parish, let alone the countryside,” said Dougal. “It’s just ignorance, a’ that. It’s the end o’ naething but your journey, and a bonnie place when you’re there; and a good dinner waiting for ye; and a grand soft bed, and your grandmither’s ain cha’lmer, that was one of the grandest leddies in the North Country. Na, na, missy, it’s no the end of the world. If ye look far ahead, yonder by the east, as soon as we come to the turn of the road, ye’ll maybe, if it’s clear, see the tower. That’s just a landmark over half the parish. Ye’ll mind it, Beenie? It’s lang or ye’ve seen so bonnie a sight.”

“Oh, ay, I mind it,” said Beenie, subdued. She had once thought, with Dougal, that the tower of Dalrugus was a fine sight. But she had tasted the waters of civilization, and the long level of the moor filled her breast, like that of her mistress, with dismay; though, indeed, it was with the eyes of Lily, rather than her own, that the kind woman saw this scene. For herself things would not be so bad. Dougal and Katrin in the kitchen would form a not uncongenial society for Robina. She did not anticipate for herself much difficulty in fitting in again to a familiar place; and she would always have her young mistress to pet and console, and to take care of. But Lily—where would Lily find anything to take her out of herself? Beenie realized, by force of sympathy, the weary gazing from the windows, the vacant landscape, through which no one ever would come, the loneliness indescribable of the great solitary moor; not one of her young companions to come lightly over the heather; neither a lad nor lass in whom the girl would find a playfellow. “Ay, I mind it,” said Beenie, shaking her head, with big tears filling her eyes.

Lily, for her part, did not feel disposed to shed any tears; her mind was full of indignation and harsher thoughts. Who could have any right to banish her here beyond sight or meeting of her kind? And it was not less but more bitter to reflect that the domestic tyrant who had banished her was scarcely so much to blame as the lover who would risk nothing to save her. If he had but stood by her—held out his hand—what to Lily would have been poverty or humbleness? She would have been content with any bare lodging in the old town, high among the roofs. She would have worked her fingers to the bone—at least Beenie would have done so, which was the same thing. That was a sacrifice she would have made willingly; but this that was demanded—who had any right to exact it? and for what was it to be exacted? For money, miserable money, the penny siller that could never buy happiness. Lily’s eyes burned like coal. Her cheeks scorched and blazed. Oh, how hard was fate, and how undeserved! For what had she done? Nothing, nothing to bring it upon herself.

It was another long hour before the gig turned the corner by the trees, where there was a momentary view of Dalrugus, and plunged again between the rising banks, where the road ran in a deep cutting, ascending the last slopes. “We’ll be at the house in five minutes,” Dougal said.

CHAPTER VI

Katrin stood under the doorway, looking out for the party: a spare, little, active woman, in that native dress of the place, which consisted of a dark woollen skirt and pink "shortgown," a garment not unlike the blouse of to-day, bound in by the band of her white apron round a sufficiently trim waist. She was of an age when any vanity of personal appearance, if ever sanctioned at all, is considered, by her grave race, to be entirely out of place; but yet was trim and neat by effect of nature, and wore the shortgown with a consciousness that it became her. A gleam of sunshine had come out as the two vehicles approached in a little procession; and Katrin had put up her hand to her eyes to shade them from that faint gleam of sun as she looked down the road. The less of sun there is the more particular people are in shielding themselves from it; which is a mystery, like so many other things in life, small as well as great. Katrin thought the dazzle was overwhelming as she stood looking out under the shadow of her curved hand. The doorway was rather small, and very dark behind her, and the strong gleam of light concentrated in her pink shortgown, and made a brilliant spot of the white cap on her head. And to Katrin the two vehicles climbing the road were as a crowd, and the arrival an event of great excitement, making an era in life. She was interested, perhaps, like her husband, most particularly in Robina, who would be an acquisition to their own society, with all her experience of the grand life of the South; but she bore a warm heart also to the little lady who had been at Dalrug as a child, and of whose beauty, and specially of whose accomplishments, there had been great reports from the servants in town to the servants on the moor. She hastened forward to place a stool on which Miss Lily could step down, and held out both her hands to help, an offer which was made quite unnecessary by the sudden spring which the girl made, alighting "like a bird" by Katrin's side. "Eh, I didna mind how light a lassie is at your age," cried the housekeeper, startled by that quick descent. "And are ye very wearied? and have ye had an awfu' journey? and, eh, yonder's Beenie, just the same as ever! I'm as glad to see ye as if I had come into a fortune. Let me take your bit bag, my bonnie lady. Give the things to me."

"Yes, Beenie is just the same as ever—and you also, Katrin, and the moor," said Lily, with a look that embraced them all. She had subdued herself, with a natural instinct of that politeness which comes from the heart, not to show these humble people, on her first arrival, how little she liked her banishment. It was not their fault; they were eager to do their utmost for her, and welcomed her with a kindness which was as near love as any inferior sentiment could be—if it was, indeed, an inferior sentiment at all. But when she stood before the dark doorway, which seemed the end of all things, it was impossible not to betray a little of the loneliness she felt. "And the moor," she repeated. But Katrin heard the words in another sense.

"Ay, my bonnie lamb! the moor, that is the finest sight of a'. It's just beautiful when there's a fine sunset, as we're going to have the night to welcome ye hame. Come away ben, my dear; come away in to your ain auld house. Oh! but I'm thankful and satisfied to have ye here!"

"Not my house, Katrin. My uncle would not like to hear you say so."

"Hoot, away! Sir Robert's bark is waur than his bite. What would he have sent such orders for, to make every thing sae comfortable, if there had been any doubt that it was your very ain house, and you his chosen heir? If Dougal were to let ye see the letter, a' full of loving kindness, and that he wanted a safe hame for his bit lassie while he was away. Oh, Miss Lily, he's an auld man to be marching forth again at the head of his troop to the wars."

"He is not going to the wars," said Lily. She could not but laugh at the droll supposition. Sir Robert, that lover of comfort and luxury, marching forth on any expedition, unless it were an expedition of pleasure! "There are no wars," she added. "We are at peace with all the world, so far as I can hear."

“Weel, I was wondering,” said Katrin. “Dougal, he says, that reads the papers, that there’s nae fighting neither in France nor what they ca’ed the Peninshula in our young days. But he says there are aye wars and rumor of wars in India, and such like places. So we thought it might, maybe, be that. Weel, I’m real content to hear that Sir Robert, that’s an old man, is no driven to boot and saddle at his age.”

“He is going, perhaps, to London,” Lily said.

“Weel, weel, and that’s no muckle better than a fight, from a’ we hear—an awfu’ place, full of a’ the scum of the earth. Puir auld gentleman! It maun be the king’s business, or else something very important of his ain, that takes him there. Anyway, he’s that particular about you, my bonnie lady, as never was. You’re to have a riding-horse when ye please, and Dougal to follow you whenever he can spare the time; and there’s a new pianny-fortey come in from Perth, and a box full of books, and I canna tell you all what. And here am I keeping you at the door, hawering all the time. You’ll mind the old stair, and the broken step three from the top; or maybe you will like to come into the dining-room first and have a morsel to stay your stomach till the dinner’s served; or maybe you would like a drink of milk; or maybe—Lord bless us! she’s up the stair like a fire flaught and paying no attention; and, oh, Beenie, my woman, is this you?”

Beenie was more willing to be entertained than her mistress, whose sudden flight upstairs left Katrin stranded in the full tide of her eloquence. She was glad to be set down to a cup of tea and the nice scones, fresh from the girdle, with which the housekeeper had intended to tempt Lily. “I’ll cover them up with the napkin to keep them warm, and when ye have ta’en your cup o’ tea, ye’ll carry some up to her on a tray, or I’ll do it mysel’, with good will; but I mind ye are aye fondest of taking care of your bonnie miss yoursel’.”

“We’ll gie her a wee moment to settle down,” said Robina: “to take a good greet,” was what she said to herself. She swallowed her tea, always with an ear intent on the sounds upstairs. She had seen by Lily’s countenance that she was able for no more, and that a moment’s interval was necessary; and there she sat consuming her heart, yet perhaps comforted a little by having the good scones to consume, too. “Oh,” she said, “ye get nothing like this in Edinburgh; ae scone’s very different from another. I have not tasted the like of this for many a year.”

“Ye see,” said Katrin, with conscious success, “a drop of skim-milk like what ye get in a town is very different from the haill cream of a milking; and I’m no a woman to spare pains ony mair than stuff. She’s a bonnie, bonnie creature, your young lady, Beenie—a wee like her mother, as far as I mind, that was nothing very much in the way of blood, ye ken, but a bonnie, bonnie young woman as ever stood. The auld leddy and Sir Robert were real mad against Mr. Randall for making such a poor match; but now there’s nobody but her bairn to stand atween the house and its end. He’ll be rael fond of her, Sir Robert—his bonny wee heir!”

“Ay,” said Beenie, “in his ain way.”

“Weel, it wasna likely to be in a woman’s way like yours or mine. The men they’ve aye their ain ways of looking at things. I’ll warrant there’s plenty of lads after her, a bonnie creature like that; and the name of Sir Robert’s siller and a’.”

“Oh, ay! she hasna wanted for lads,” Beenie said.

“And what’ll be the reason, Beenie, since the auld gentleman’s no going to the wars, as Dougal and me thought—what’ll be the reason, are ye thinkin’, for the young leddy coming here? He said it was to be safe at hame while he was away.”

“Maybe he would be right if that’s what he says.”

“Oh, Beenie, woman,” cried Katrin, “you’re secret, secret! Do you think we are no just as keen as you to please our young leddy and make her comfortable? or as taken up to ken why she’s been sent away from a’ her parties and pleasurings to bide here?”

“There’s no many parties nor pleasurings here for her,” said Dougal, joining the two women in the low but airy kitchen, where the big fire was pleasant to look upon, and the brick floor very

red, and the hearthstone very white. The door, which stood always open, afforded a glimpse of the universal background, the everywhere-extending moor, and the air came in keen, though the day was a day in June. Dougal pushed his bonnet to one side to scratch his grizzled head. In these regions, as indeed in many others, it is not necessary to take off one's headgear when one comes indoors. "There's neither lad to run after her nor leddies to keep her company. If she's light-headed, or the like of that, there canna be a better place than oor moor."

"Light-headed!" said Robina in high scorn. "It just shows how little you ken. And where would I be, a discreet person, if my young leddy was light-headed? She's just as modest and as guid as ever set foot on the heather. My bonnie wee woman! And as innocent as the babe new-born."

Dougal pushed his cap to the other side of his head, as if that might afford enlightenment. "Then a' I can say is that it's very queer." And he added after an interval: "I never pretend to understand Sir Robert; he's an awfu' funny man."

"He might play off his fun better than upon Miss Lily," said his wife in anxious tones.

"And that minds me that I'm just hawering here when I should be carrying up the tray," said Beenie. "Some of those cream scones—they're the nicest; and that fine apple jelly is the best I've tasted for long. And now the wee bit teapot, and a good jug of your nice fresh milk that she will, maybe, like better than the tea."

"And my fine eggs—with a yolk like gold, and white that is just like curds and cream."

"Na," said Beenie, waving them away, "that would just be too much; let me alone with the scones, and the milk and the tea."

She went up the spiral stairs, making a cheerful noise with her cups and her tray. A noise was pleasant in this quiet place. Beenie understood, without knowing how, that the little clatter, the sound of some one coming, was essential to this new life; and though her arm was very steady by nature, she made every thing ring with a little tinkle of cheerfulness and "company." The drawing-room of the house, which opened direct from the stairs with little more than a broadened step for a landing, was a large room occupying all the breadth of the tall gable, which was called the tower. It was not high, and the windows were small, set in deep recesses, with spare and dingy curtains. The carpet was of design un conjecturable, and of dark color worn by use to a deep dinginess of mingled black and brown. The only cheerful thing in the room was a rug before the fireplace, made of strips of colored cloth, which was Katrin's winter work to beguile the long evenings, and in which the instinct of self-preservation had woven many bits of red, relics or patterns of soldiers' coats. The eye caught that one spot of color instinctively. Beenie looked at it as she put down her tray, and Lily had already turned to it a dozen times, as if there was something good to be got there. The walls were painted in panels of dirty green, and hung with a few pictures, which made the dinginess hideous—staring portraits executed by some country artist, or, older relics still, faces which had sunk altogether into the gloom. Three of the windows looked out on the moor, one in a corner upon the yard, where Rory and his companion were stabled, and where there was an audible cackle of fowls, and sometimes Katrin's voice coming and going "as if a door were shut between you and the sound." Lily had been roaming about, as was evident by the cloak flung in one corner, the hat in another, the gloves on the table, the little bag upon the floor. She had gravitated, however, as imaginative creatures do, to the window, and sat there when Beenie entered as if she had been sitting there all her life, gazing out upon the monotonous blank of the landscape and already unconscious of what she saw.

"Well, Miss Lily," said Robina cheerfully, "here we are at last; and thankfu' I am to think that I can sit still the day, and get up in peace the morn without either coach or boat to make me jump. And here's your tea, my bonnie dear—and cream scones, Katrin's best, that I have not seen the like of since I left Kinloch-Rugas. Edinburgh's a grand place, and many a bonnie thing is there; and maybe we'll whiles wish ourselves back; but nothing like Katrin's scones have ye put within your lips for many a day. My dear bonnie bairn, come and sit down comfortable at this nice little table and get your tea."

"Tea!" said Lily; her lips were quivering, so that a laugh was the only escape—or else the other thing. "You mind nothing," she cried, "so long as you have your tea."

"Weel, it makes up for many things, that's true," said Beenie, eager to adopt her young mistress's tone. "Bless me, Miss Lily, it's no the moment to take to that weary window and just stare across the moor when ye ken well there is nothing to be seen. It will be time enough when we're wearied waiting, or when there's any reasonable prospect—"

"What do you mean?" cried Lily, springing up from her seat. "Reasonable prospect—of what, I would like to know? and weary waiting—for whom? How dare you say such silly words to me? I am waiting for nobody!" cried Lily, in her exasperation clapping her hands together, "and there is no reasonable prospect—if it were not to fall from the top of the tower, or sink into the peat-moss some lucky day."

"You're awfu' confident, Miss Lily," said the maid, "but I'm a great deal older than you are, and it would be a strange thing if I had not mair sense. I just tell you there's no saying; and if the Queen of Sheba was here, she could utter no more."

"You would make a grand Queen of Sheba," said Lily, with eyes sparkling and cheeks burning; "and what is it your Majesty tells me? for I cannot make head nor tail of it for my part."

"I just tell you, there's no saying," Beenie repeated very deliberately, looking the young lady in the face.

Poor Lily! her face was glowing with sudden hope, her slight fingers trembled. What did the woman mean who knew every thing? "When we're wearied waiting—when there's no reasonable prospect." Oh, what, what did the woman mean? Had there been something said to her that could not be said to Lily? Were there feet already on the road, marching hither, hither, bringing love and bringing joy? "There's no saying." A woman like Robina would not say that without some reason. It was enigmatical; but what could it mean but something good? and what good could happen but one thing? Beenie, in fact, meant nothing but the vaguest of consolations—she had no comfort to give; but it was not in a woman's heart to shut out imagination and confess that hope was over. Who would venture to say that there was no hope, any day, any moment, in a young life, of something happening which would make all right again? No oracle could have said less; and yet it meant every thing. Lily, in the light of possibility that suddenly sprang up around her, illuminating the moor better than the pale sunshine, and making this bare and cold room into a habitable place, took heart to return to the happy ordinary of existence, and remembered that she was hungry and that Katrin's scones were very good and the apple jelly beautiful to behold. It was a prosaic result, you may say, but yet it was a happy one, for she was very tired, and had great need of refreshment and support. She took her simple meal which was so pretty to look at—never an inconsiderable matter on a woman's table; the scones wrapped in their white napkin, the jug of creamy milk, the glass dish with its clear pink jelly. She ate and drank with much satisfaction, and then, with Beenie at her side, went wandering over the house to see if there was any furniture to be found more cheerful than the curtains and carpets in the drawing-room. The days of "taste" had not arisen—no fans from Japan had yet been seen in England, far less upon the moors; but yet the natural instinct existed to attempt a little improvement in the stiff dulness of the place. Lily was soon running over all the house with a song on her lips—commoner in those days when music was not so carefully cultivated—and a skipping measure in the patter of her feet. "Hear till her," said Dougal to Katrin; "our peace and quiet's done." "Hear till her indeed, ye auld crabbit body! It's the blessing o' the Lord come to the house," said Katrin to Dougal. He pushed his cap now to one side, now to the other, with a scratch of impartial consultation what was to come of it—but also a secret pleasure that brought out a little moisture under his shaggy eyebrows. The old pair sat up a full half-hour later, out of pure pleasure in the consciousness of the new inmate under that roof where they had so long abode in silence. And Lily rushed upstairs and downstairs, and thrilled the old floor with her hurried feet, but kept always saying over to herself those words which were the fountain of contentment—or rather expectation, which is better: "There's no saying

—there's no saying!" If Beenie knew nothing in which there was a reasonable hope, how could she have suffered herself to speak?

CHAPTER VII

When Lily got up next morning, it was to the cheerful sounds of the yard, the clucking of fowls, the voices of the kitchen calling to each other, Katrin darting out a sentence as she came to the door, Dougal growling a bass order to the boy, the sounds of whose hissing and movement over his stable-work were as steady as if Rory were being groomed like a racer till his coat shone. It is not pleasant to be disturbed by Chanticleer and his handmaidens in the middle of one's morning sleep, nor to hear the swing of the stable pails, and the hoofs of the horses, and the shouts to each other of the outdoor servants. I should not like to have even one window of my bedchamber exposed to these noises. But Lily sprang up and ran to the window, cheered by this rustic Babel, and looked out with keen pleasure upon the rush of the fowls to Katrin's feet as she stood with her apron filled with grain, flinging it out in handfuls, and upon the prospect through the stable of the boy hissing and rubbing down Rory, who clattered with his impatient hoofs and would not stand still to have his toilet made. Dougal was engaged in the byre, in some more important operations with the cow, whose present hope and representative—a weak-kneed, staggering calf—looked out from the door with that solemn stare of wondering imbecility which is often so pathetic. Lily did not think of pathos. She was cheered beyond measure to look out on all this active life instead of the silent moor. The world was continuing to go round all the same, the creatures had to be fed, the new day had begun—notwithstanding that she was banished to the end of the world; and this was no end of the world after all, but just a corner of the country, where life kept going on all the same, whether a foolish little girl had been to a ball overnight, or had arrived in solitude and tears at the scene of her exile. A healthful nature has always some spring in it at the opening of a new day.

She went over the place under Katrin's guidance, when she had dressed and breakfasted, and was as ready to be amused and diverted as if she had found every thing going her own way; which shows that Lily was no young lady heroine, but an honest girl of twenty-two following the impulses of nature. The little establishment at Dalrugus was not a farm. It had none of the fluctuations, none of the anxieties, which befall a humble agriculturist who has to make his living out of a few not very friendly acres, good year and bad year together. Dougal loved, indeed, to grumble when any harm came over the potatoes, or when his hay was spoiled, as it generally was, by the rain. He liked to pose as an unfortunate farmer, persecuted by the elements; but the steady wages which Sir Robert paid, with the utmost regularity, were as a rock at the back of this careful couple, whose little harvest was for the sustenance of their little household, and did not require to be sold to produce the ready money of which they stood so very little in need. Therefore all was prosperous in the little place. The eggs, indeed, produced so plentifully, were not much profit in a place where every-body else produced eggs in their own barnyards; but a sitting from Katrin's fowls was much esteemed in the countryside, and brought her honor and sometimes a pleasant present in kind, which was to the advantage both of her comfort and self-esteem. But a calf was a thing which brought in a little money; and the milk formed a great part of the living of the house in various forms, and when there was any over, did good to the poor folk who are always with us, on the banks of the Rugas as in other places. Dougal would talk big by times about his losses—a farmer, however small, is nothing without them; but his loss sat very lightly on his shoulders, and his comfort was great and his little gains very secure. The little steading which lurked behind Sir Robert's gray house, and was a quite unthought-of adjunct to it, did very well in all its small traffic and barter under such conditions. The mission of Dougal and his wife was to be there, always ready to receive the master when he chose to "come North," as they called it, with the shooting-party, for whom Katrin always kept her best sheets well aired. But Sir Robert had no mind to trust himself in the chilly North: that was all very well when a man was strong and active, and liked nothing so much as to tramp the moor all day, and keep his friends at heck and manger. But a man's friends get fewer as he gets old, and other kinds of pleasure attract him. It was perhaps a

dozen years since he had visited his spare paternal house. And Dougal and Katrin had come to think the place was theirs, and the cocks and the hens, and the cows and ponies, the chief interest in it. But they were no niggards; they would have been glad to see Sir Robert himself had he come to pay them a visit; they were still more glad to see Lily, and to make her feel herself the princess, or it might be altogether more correct to say the suzerain, under whom they reigned. They did not expect her to interfere, which made her welcome all the more warm. As for Sir Robert, he might perhaps have interfered; but even in the face of that doubt Dougal and Katrin would have acted as became them, and received him with a kindly welcome.

“Ye see, this is where I keep the fowls,” said Katrin. “It was a kind of a gun-room once; but it’s a place where a shootin’ gentleman never sets his fit, and there’s no a gun fired but Dougal’s auld carabreen. What’s the use of keeping up thae empty places, gaun to rack and ruin, with grand names till them? The sitting hens are just awfu’ comfortable in here; and as for Cockmaleerie, he mairches in and mairches out, like Mr. Smeaton, the school-master, that has five daughters, besides his wife, and takes his walks at the head of them. A cock is wonderful like a man. If you just saw the way auld Smeaton turns his head, and flings a word now and then at the chattering creatures after him! We’ve put the pig-sty out here. It’s no just the place, perhaps, so near the house; but it’s real convenient; and as the wind is maistly from the east, ye never get any smell to speak of. Besides, that’s no the kind of smell that does harm. The black powny he’s away to the moor for peat; but there’s Rory, aye taking another rug at his provender. He’s an auld farrant beast. He’s just said to himself, as you or me might do: ‘Here’s a stranger come, and I am the carriage-horse; and let’s just make the most of it.’”

“He must be very conceited if he thinks himself a carriage-horse,” said Lily, with a laugh.

“Deed, and he’s the only ane; and no a bad substitute. As our auld minister said the day yon young lad was preaching: ‘No a bad substitute.’ I trow no, seeing he’s now the assistant and successor, and very well likit; and if it could only be settled between him and Miss Eelen there could be naething more to be desired. But that’s no the question. About Rory, Miss Lily—”

“I would much rather hear about Miss Helen. Who is Miss Helen? Is it the minister’s little girl that used to come out to Dalrugas to play with me?”

“She’s a good ten years older than you, Miss Lily.”

“I don’t think so. I was—how old?—nine; and I am sure she was not grown up, nor any thing like it. And so she can’t make up her mind to take the assistant and successor? Tell me, Katrin, tell me! I want to hear all the story. It is something to find a story here.”

“There are plenty of stories,” said Katrin; “and I’ll tell you every one of them. But about Miss Eelen. She’s a very little thing. You at nine were bigger than she was—let us say—at sixteen. There maun be five years atween you, and now she’ll be six-and-twenty. No, it’s no auld, and she’s but a bairn to look at, and she will just be a fine friend for you, Miss Lily; for though they’re plain folk, she has been real well brought up, and away at the school in Edinburgh, and plays the pianny, and a’ that kind of thing. I have mair opinion mysel’ of a good seam; but we canna expect every-body to have that sense.”

“And why will she have nothing to say to the assistant and successor? and what is his name?”

“His name is Douglas, James Douglas, of a westland family, and no that ill-looking, and well likit. Eh, but you’re keen of a story, Miss Lily, like a’ your kind. But I never said she would have naething to say to him. She is just great friends with him. They are aye plotting thegither for the poor folk, as if there was nothing needed but a minister and twa-three guid words to make heaven on earth. Oh, my bonnie lady, if it could be done as easy as that! There’s that drunken body, Johnny Wright, that keeps the merchant’s shop.” Katrin was a well-educated woman in her way, and never put *f* for *w*, which is the custom of her district; but she said *chop* for *shop*, an etymology which it is unnecessary to follow here. “But it’s a good intention—a good intention. They are aye plotting how they are to mend their neighbors; and the strange thing is— But, dear, bless us! what are we to be hawering about other folk’s weakness when nae doubt we have plenty of our ain?”

"I am not to be cheated out of my story, Katrin. Do you mean that the young minister is not a good man himself?"

"Bless us, no! that's not what I mean. He's just as pious a lad and as weel living— It's no that—it's no that. It's just one o' thae mysteries that you're far o'er-young to understand. She's been keen to mend other folk, poor lass; and that the minister should speak to them, and show them the error o' their ways! But the dreadful thing is that her poor bit heart is just bound up in a lad—a ne'er-do-weel, that is the worst of them all. Oh, dinna speak of it, Miss Lily, dinna speak of it! I'll tell you anither time; or, maybe, I'll no tell ye at all. Come in and see the kye. They're honest creatures. There's nothing o' the deevil and his dreadful ways in them."

"I wouldna be ower sure of that," said Dougal, who came to meet them to the door of the byre, his cap hanging on to the side of his head, upon one grizzled lock, so many pushes and scratches had it received in the heat of his exertions. "There's Crummie, just as little open to raison as if she were a wuman. No a step will she budge, though it's clean strae and soft lying that I'm offering till her. Gang ben, and try what ye can do. She's just furious. I canna tell what she thinks, bucking at me, and butting at me, as if I was gaun to carry her off to the butcher instead of just setting her bed in comfort for her trouble. None of the deil in them! What d'ye say to Rory? He's a deil a'thegether, from the crown of his head to his off leg, the little evil spirit! And what's that muckle cock ye're so proud o'? Just Satan incarnate, that's my opinion, stampin' out his ain progeny when they're o' the same sect as himsel'. Dinna you trust to what she says, Miss Lily. There's nae place in this world where *he* is not gaun about like a roarin' lion, seekin', as the Scripture saith, whom he may devour."

"Eh, man," said his wife, coming out a little red, yet triumphant, "but you're a poor hand with your doctrines and your opinions! A wheen soft words in poor Crummie's ear, and a clap upon her bonnie broad back, poor woman, and she's as quiet as a lamb. Ye've been tugging at her, and swearing at her, though I aye tell ye no. Fleeching is aye better than fechtin, if ye would only believe me—whether it's a woman or a bairn or a poor timorsome coo."

"Ye're a' alike," said Dougal, with a grunt, returning to his work. "I'm thinking," he said, pausing to deliver his broadside, "that, saving your presence, Miss Lily, weemen are just what ye may call the head of the irrational creation. It's men that's a little lower than the angels; we're them that are made in the image of God. But when ye speak o' the whole creation that groaneth and travaileth, I'm thinking—"

"Ye'll just think at your work, and haud your ill tongue before the young lady," cried his wife in high wrath. But she, too, added as he swung away with a big laugh: "Onyway, by your ain comparison, we're at the head and you're at the tail. Come away, Miss Lily, and see the bonnie doos. There is nae ill speaking among them. I'm no so sure," she added, however, when out of hearing of her husband, "I've heard yon muckle cushat, the one with the grand ruff about his neck, swearin' at his bonnie wifie, or else I'm sair mista'en. It's just in the nature o' the men-kind. They like ye weel enough, but they maun aye be gibing at ye, and jeerin' at ye—but, bless me, a bit young thing like you, it's no to be expeckit ye could understand."

The pigeons were very tame, and alighted not only on Katrin's capacious shoulders, who "shoo'd" them off, but on Lily's, who liked the sentiment, and to find herself so familiarly accosted by creatures so highly elevated above mere cocks and hens—"the bonnie creatures," as Katrin said, who sidl'd and bridl'd about her, with mincing steps and graceful movements. "The doocot" was an old gray tower, standing apart from the barnyard, in a small field, the traditional appendage of every old Scotch house of any importance. To come upon Rory afterward, dragging after him the boy, by name Sandy, and not unlike, either in complexion or shape, to the superior animal whom he was supposed to be taking out for exercise, brought back, if not the former discussion on the prevalence of evil, at least a practical instance of "the deevil" that was in the pony, and was an additional amusement. Lily made instant trial of the feminine ministrations which had been so effective with the cow, whispering in Rory's ear, and stroking his impatient nose, without, however, any marked effect.

“He’ll soon get used to ye,” Katrin said consolingly, “and then you’ll can ride him down to the town, and make your bit visits, and get any thing that strikes your fancy at the shop. Oh, you’ll find there’s plenty to divert ye, my bonnie leddy, when once ye are settled down.”

Would it be so? Lily felt, in the courage of the morning, that it might be possible. She resolved to be good, as a child resolves; there should be no silly despair, no brooding nor making the worst of things. She would interest herself in the beasts and the birds, in Rory, the pony, and Crummie, the cow. She would always have something to do. Her little school accomplishment of drawing, in which she had made some progress according to the drawing-master, she would take that up again. The kind of drawing Lily had learned consisted in little more than copying other drawings; but that, when it had been carefully done, had been thought a great deal of at school. And then there was the fine fancy-work which had been taught her—the wonderful things in Berlin wool, which was adapted to so many purposes, and occupied so large a share of feminine lives. Miss Martineau, that strong-minded politician and philosopher, amused her leisure with it, and why should not Lily? But Berlin patterns, and all the beautiful shades of the wool, could not, alas! be had on Dalrugas moor. Lily decided bravely that she would knit stockings at least, and that practice would soon overcome that difficulty about turning the heel which had damped her early efforts. She would knit warm stockings for Sir Robert—warm and soft as he liked them—ribbed so as to cling close to his handsome old leg, and show its proportions, and so, perhaps, touch his heart. And then there would, no doubt, turn up, from time to time, something to do for the poor folk. Surely, surely there would be employment enough to “keep her heart.” Then she would go to Kinloch-Rugas and see “Miss Eelen,” Helen Blythe, the minister’s daughter, whom she remembered well, with the admiration of a little girl for one much older than herself. Here was something that would interest her and occupy her mind, and prevent her from thinking. And then there were the old books in the library, in which she feared there would be little amusement, but probably a great many good books that she had not read, and what a fine opportunity for her to improve her mind! Her present circumstances were quite usual features in the novels before the age of Sir Walter: a residence in an old castle or other lonely house, where a persecuted heroine had the best of reading, and emerged quite an accomplished woman, was the commonest situation. She said to herself that there would be plenty to do, that she would not leave a moment without employment, that her life would be too busy and too full to leave any time for gazing out at that window, watching the little bit of road, and looking, looking for some one who never came. Having drawn up this useful programme, and decided how she was to spend every day, Lily, poor Lily, all alone—even Beenie having gone down stairs for a long talk with Katrin—seated herself, quite unconsciously, at the window, and gazed and gazed, without intermission, at the little corner of the road that climbed the brae, and across the long level of the unbroken moor.

CHAPTER VIII

The days that succeeded were very much like this first day. In the morning Lily went out “among the beasts,” and visited, with all the interest she could manage to excite in herself, the byre and the stable, the ponies and the cows. She persuaded herself into a certain amusement in contrasting the very different characters of Rory, the spoiled and superior, with that little sturdy performer of duty without vagary, who had not even a name to bless himself with, but was to all and sundry the black powny and no more. Poor little black powny, he supported Rory’s airs without a word; he gave in to the fact that he was the servant and his stable companion the gentleman. He went to the moor for peat, and to the howe for potatoes, and to the town for whatever was wanted, without so much as a toss of his shaggy head. Nothing tired the black powny, any more than any thing ever tired the “buoy” who drove and fed and groomed him, as much grooming as he ever had. Sandy was the “buoy,” just as his charge was the black powny. They went everywhere together, lived together, it was thought even slept together; and though the “buoy” in reality occupied the room above the stable, which was entered by a ladder—the loft, in common parlance—the two shaggy creatures were as one. All these particulars Lily learned, and tried to find a little fun, a little diversion in them. But it was a thin vein and soon exhausted, at least by her preoccupied mind.

The post came seldom to this place at the end of the world. It never indeed came at all. When there were other errands to do in the village, the buoy and the black powny called at the post-office to ask for letters—when they remembered; but very often Sandy did not mind, *i. e.*, recollect, to do this, and it did not matter much. Sir Robert, indeed, had made known his will that there were to be no letters, and correspondence was sluggish in those days. Lily had not bowed her spirit to the point of promising that she would not write to whomsoever she pleased, but she was too proud to be the first to do so, and, save a few girl epistles for which, poor child, she did not care, and which secured her only a succession of disappointments, nothing came to lighten her solitude. No, she would not write first, she would not tell him her address. He could soon find that out if he wanted to find it. Sir Robert Ramsay was not nobody, that there should be any trouble in finding out where his house was, however far off it might be. Poor Lily, when she said this to herself, did not really entertain a doubt that Ronald would manage to write to her. But he did not do so. The post came in at intervals, the powny and the boy went to the town, and minded or did not mind to call for the letters: but what did it matter when no letters ever came? Ah, one from Sir Robert, hoping she found the air of the moor beneficial; one from a light-hearted school-fellow, narrating all the dances there had been since Lily went away, and the last new fashion, and how like Alice Scott it was to be the first to appear in it. But no more. This foolish little epistle, at first dashed on the ground in her disappointment, Lily went over again, through every line, to see whether somewhere in a corner there did not lurk the name which she was sick with longing to see. It might so easily have been here: “I danced with Ronald Lumsden and he was telling me,” or, “Ronald Lumsden called and was asking about you.” Such a crumb of refreshment as that Lily would have been glad of; but it never came.

Yet she struggled bravely to keep up her heart. One of those early days, after sundry attempts on the moor, where she gradually vanquished him, Lily rode Rory into Kinloch-Rugas with only a few controversies on the way. She was light and she was quiet, making no clattering at his heels as the gig did, and by degrees Rory habituated himself to the light burden and the moderate amount of control which she exercised over him. It amused him after a while to see the whisk of her habit, which proved to be no unknown drag or other mechanism, but really a harmless thing, not heavy at all, and as she gave him much of his own way and lumps of sugar and no whip to speak of, he became very soon docile—as docile as his nature permitted—and gave her only as much trouble as amused Lily. They went all the way to the town together, an incongruous but friendly pair, he pausing occasionally when a very tempting mouthful of emerald-green grass appeared among the bunches of

ling, she addressing him with amiable remonstrances as Dougal did, and eventually touching his point of honor or sense of shame, so that he made a little burst of unaccustomed speed, and got over a good deal of ground in the stimulus thus applied. He was not like the trim and glossy steeds on which, with her long habit reaching half-way to the ground, and a careful groom behind, Lily had ridden out with Sir Robert in the days of her grandeur, which already seemed so far off. But she was, perhaps, quite as comfortable in the tweed skirt, in which she could spring unfettered from Rory's back and move about easily without yards of heavy cloth to carry. The long habit and the sleek steed and the groom turned out to perfection would have been out of place on the moor; but Rory, jogging along with his rough coat, and his young mistress in homespun were entirely appropriate to the landscape.

It required a good many efforts, however, before the final code of amity was established between them, the rule of bearing and forbearing, which encouraged Lily to so long a ride. When she slipped off his back at the Manse door, Rory tossed his shaggy head with an air of relief, and looked as if he might have set off home immediately to save himself further trouble; but he thought better of it after a moment and a few lumps of sugar, and was soon in the careful hands of the minister's man, who was an old and intimate friend, and on the frankest terms of remonstrance and advice. Lily was not by any means so familiar in the minister's house. She went through the little ragged shrubbery where the big straggling lilac bushes were all bare and brown, and the berries of the rowan-trees beginning to redden, but every thing unkempt and ungracious, the stems burned, and the leaves blown away before their time by an unfriendly wind. The monthly rose upon the house made a good show with its delicate blossoms, looking far too fragile for such a place, yet triumphant in its weakness over more robust flowers; and a still more fragile-looking but tenacious and indestructible plant, the great white bindweed or wild convolvulus, covered the little porch with its graceful trails of green, and delicate flowers, which last so short a time, yet form so common a decoration of the humblest Highland cottages. Lily paused to look through the light lines of the climbing verdure as she knocked at the Manse door. It was so unlike any thing that could be expected to bloom and flourish in the keen northern air. It gave her a sort of consoling sense that other things as unlike the sternness of the surroundings might be awaiting her, even here, at the end of the world.

And nothing could have been more like the monthly rose on the dark gray wall of the Manse than Helen Blythe, who came out of the homely parlor to greet Lily when she heard who the visitor was. "Miss Eelen" was Lily's senior by even more than had been supposed, but she did not show any sign of mature years. She was very light of figure and quick of movement, with a clear little morning face extremely delicate in color, mild brown eyes that looked full of dew and freshness, and soft brown hair. She came out eagerly, her "seam" in her hand, a mass of whiteness against her dark dress, saying, "Miss Ramsay, Dalrugas?" with a quick interrogative note, and then Helen threw down her work and held out both her hands. "Oh, my bonnie little Lily," she cried in sweet familiar tones. "And is it you? and is it really you?"

"I think I should have known you anywhere," said Lily. "You are not changed, not changed a bit; but I am not little Lily any longer. I am a great deal bigger than you."

"You always were, I think," said Helen, "though you were only a bairn and me a little, little woman, nearly a woman, when you were here last. Come ben, my dear, come ben and see papa. He does not move about much or he would have come to welcome you. But wait a moment till I get my seam, and till I find my thimble; it's fallen off my finger in the fulness of my heart, for I could not bide to think about that when I saw it was you. And, oh, stand still, my dear, or you'll tramp upon it! and it's my silver thimble and not another nearer than Aberdeen."

"I've got one," cried Lily, "and you shall have it, Helen, for I fear, I fear it is not so very much use to me."

"Oh, whisht, my dear. You must not tell me you don't like your seam. How would the house go on, and what would folk do without somebody to sew? For my part I could not live without my seam. Canny, canny, my bonnie woman, there it is! They are just dreadful things for running into corners

—almost as bad as a ring. But there is a mischief about a ring that is not in a thimble,” said Helen, rising, with her soft cheeks flushed, having rescued the errant thimble from the floor.

“And are you always at your seam,” said Lily, “just as you were when I was little, and you used to come to Dalrugas to play?”

“I don’t think you were ever so little as me,” said Helen with her rustic idiom and accent, her low voice and her sweet look, both as fresh as the air upon the moor. She did not reach much higher than Lily’s shoulder. She had the most serene and smiling face, full, one would have said, of genuine ease of heart. Was this so? or was her mind full, as Katrin had said, of unhappy love and anxious thoughts? But it was impossible to believe so, looking at this soft countenance, the mouth which had not a line, and the eyes which had not a care.

Nowadays the humblest dwelling which boasts two rooms to sit in possesses a dining-room and drawing-room, but at that period drawing-rooms were for grand houses only, and the parlor was the name of the family dwelling-place. It was very dingy, if truth must be told. The furniture was of heavy mahogany, with black hair-cloth. Though it was still high summer, there was a fire in the old-fashioned black grate, and close beside, in his black easy chair, was the minister, a heavy old man with a bad leg, who was no longer able to get about, and indeed did very little save criticise the actions of his assistant and successor, a man of new-fangled ways and ideas unlike his own. He had an old plaid over his shoulders, for he was chilly, and a good deal of snuff hanging about the lapels of his coat. His countenance was large and fresh-colored, and his hair white. In those days it was not the fashion to wear a beard.

“So that’s Miss Lily from the town,” he said. “Come away ben, come ben. Set a chair by the fire for the young lady, Eelen, for she’ll be cold coming off the moor. It’s always a cold bit, the moor. Many a cough I’ve caught there when I was more about the countryside than I am now. Old age and a meeserable body are sore hindrances to getting about. Ye know neither of them, my young friend, and I hope you’ll never know.”

“Well, papa, it is to be hoped Lily will live to be old, for most folk desires it,” said Helen. *Papaw*, a harsh reporter would have considered her to say, but it was not so broad as a *w*; it was more like two *a*’s—*papaa*—which she really said. She smiled very benignantly upon the old gentleman and the young creature whom he accosted. The name of gout was never mentioned, was, indeed, considered an unholy thing, the product of port-wine and made dishes, and not to be laid to the account of a clergyman. But Mr. Blythe contemplated with emotion, supported on his footstool, the dimensions of a much swollen toe.

“Well,” said he, “I hope she’ll never live to have the rose in her foot, or any other ailment of the kind. And how’s Sir Robert, my dear? Him and me are neighbor-like; there is not very much between us. Is he coming North this year to have a pop at the birds, or is he thinking like me, I wonder, that a good easy chair by the fire is the best thing for an auld man? and a brace of grouse well cooked and laid upon a toast more admirable than any number of them on the moor?”

“I don’t think he is coming for the shooting,” said Lily, doubtful. Sir Robert was in many respects what was then called a dandy, and any thing more unlike the exquisite arrangements for his comfort, carried out by his valet, than the old clergyman’s black cushion and footstool and smouldering fire could not be.

“You’ll have had an illness yourself,” said the minister, “though you do not look like it, I must say. Does she, now, Eelen, with a color like that? But your uncle would have done better, my dear, to take you travelling, or some place where ye would have seen a little society and young persons like yourself, than to send you here. He’ll maybe have forgotten what a quiet place it is, and no fit for the like of you. But I’ll let him know, I’ll let him know as soon as he comes up among us, which no doubt he will soon do now.”

“Now, papa,” said Helen, “you will just let Sir Robert alone, and no plot with him to carry Lily away from me: for I am counting very much upon her for company, and it will do her no harm to get

the air of the moor for a while and forget all the dissipations of Edinburgh. You will have to tell me all about them, Lily, for I'm the country mouse that has never been away from home. Eh," said Helen, "I have no doubt every thing is far grander when you're far off from it than when you're near. I dare say you were tired of the Edinburgh parties, and I would just give a great deal to see one of them. And most likely you thought the Tower would be delightful, while we are only thinking how dull it will be for you. That is aye the way; what we have we think little of, and what we have not we desire."

"I was not tired," said Lily, "except sometimes of the grand dinners that Uncle Robert is so fond of, and I cannot say that I expected the Tower to be delightful; but you know I have no father of my own, and I must just do what I am told."

"My dear," said the old minister, "I see you have a fine judgment; for if you had a father of your own, like Eelen there, you would just turn him round your little finger; and I'm much surprised you don't do the same, a fine creature like you, with your uncle too."

"Whisht, papa," said Helen; "we'll have in the tea, which you know you're always fond of to get a cup when you can, and it'll be a refreshment to Lily after her ride. And in the meantime you can tell her some of your stories to make her laugh, for a laugh's a fine thing for a young creature whatsoever it's about, if it's only havers."

"Which my auld stories are, ye think?" said the minister. "Go away, go away and mask your tea. Miss Lily and me will get on very well without you. I'll tell ye no stories. They are all very old, and the most of them are printed. If I were to entertain ye with my anecdotes of auld ministers and beadles and the like, ye would perhaps find them again in a book, and ye would say to yourself, 'Eh, there's the story Mr. Blythe told me, as if it was out of his own head,' and you would never believe in me more. But for all that it's no test being in a book; most of mine are in books, and yet they are mine, and it was me that put them together all the same. But I have remarked that our own concerns are more interesting to us than the best of stories, and I'm a kind of spiritual father to you, my dear. If I did not christen you, I christened your father. Tell me, now that Eelen's out of the way, what is it that brought ye here? Is it something about a bonnie lad, my bonnie young lass? for that's the commonest cause of banishment, and as it cannot be carried out with the young man, it's the poor wee lassies that have the brunt to bear—"

"I never said," cried Lily, angry tears coming to her eyes, "that there was any reason or that it was for punishment. I just came here because—because Uncle Robert wanted me to come," she added in a little burst of indignation, yet dignity; "and nobody that I know has a right to say a word."

"Just so," said Mr. Blythe; "he wanted you, no doubt, to give an eye to Dougal and Katrin, who might be taking in lodgers or shooting the moors for their own profit for any thing that he can tell. He's an auld-farrant chield, Sir Robert. He would not say a word to you, but he would reckon that you would find out."

"Mr. Blythe," cried Lily with fresh indignation, "if you think my uncle sent me here for a spy, to find out things that do not exist—"

"No, my dear, I don't, I don't," said the minister. "I am satisfied he has a mind above that, and you too. But he's not without a thread of suspicion in him; indeed, he's like most men of his years and experience, and believes in nobody. No, no, Dougal does not put the moor to profit, which might be a temptation to many men; but he has plenty of sport himself in a canny way, and there's a great deal of good game just wasted. You may tell Sir Robert that from his old friend. Just a great deal of good game wasted. He should come and bring a few nice lads to divert you, and shoot the moor himself."

"That's just one of papa's crazes," said Helen, returning with her teapot in her hand, the tray, with all its jingling cups and saucers, having been put on the table in the meantime. "He thinks the gentlemen should come back from wherever they are, or whatever they may be doing, to shoot the moors. It would certainly be far more cheery for the countryside, but very likely Sir Robert cares nothing about the moor, and is just content with the few brace of grouse that Dougal sends him. I believe it's considered a luxury and something grand to put on the table in other places, but we have

just too much of it here. Now draw to the table and take your tea. The scones are just made, and I can recommend the shortbread, and you must be wanting something after your ride. I have told John to give the powny a feed, and you will feel all the better, the two of you, for a little rest and refreshment. Draw in to the table, my bonnie dear.”

These were before the days of afternoon tea; but the institution existed more or less, though not in name, and “the tea” was administered before its proper time or repeated with a sense of guilt in many houses, where the long afternoon was the portion of the day which it was least easy to get through—when life was most languid, and occupation at a lull. Lily ate her shortbread with a girl’s appetite, and took pleasure in her visit. When she mounted Rory again and set forth on her return, she asked herself with great wonder whether it was possible that there could be any thing under that soft aspect of Helen Blythe, her serene countenance and delicate color, which could in any way correspond with the trouble and commotion in her own young bosom? Helen had, indeed, her father to care for, she was at home, and had, no doubt, friends; but was it possible that a thought of some one who was not there lay at the bottom of all?

Lily confessed to Robina when she got home that she had been much enlivened by her visit, and that Helen was coming to see her, and that all would go well; but when Beenie, much cheered, went down stairs to her tea, Lily unconsciously drew once more to that window, that watchtower, from which nobody was ever visible. The moor lay in all the glory of the evening, already beginning to warm and glow with the heather, every bud of which awoke to brightness in the long rays of the setting sun. It was as if it came to life as the summer days wore toward autumn. The mountains stood round, blue and purple, in their unbroken veil of distance and visionary greatness, but the moor was becoming alive and full of color, warming out of all bleakness and grayness into life and light. The corner of the road under the trees showed like a peep into a real world, not a dreary vacancy from which no one came. There was a cart slowly toiling its way up the slope, its homely sound as it came on informing the silence of something moving, neighborly, living. Lily smiled unconsciously as if it had been a friend. And when the cart had passed, there appeared a figure, alone, walking quickly, not with the slow wading, as if among the heather, of the rare, ordinary passer-by. Lily’s interest quickened in spite of herself as she saw the wayfarer breasting the hill. Who could he be, she wondered. Some sportsman, come for the grouse—some gentleman, trained not only to moorland walking, but to quick progress over smoother roads. He skimmed along under the fir-trees at the corner, up the little visible ascent. Lily almost thought she could hear his steps sounding so lightly, like a half-forgotten music that she was glad, glad to hear again; but he disappeared soon under the rising bank, as every thing did, and she was once more alone in the world. The sun sank, the horizon turned gray, the moor became once more a wilderness in which no life or movement was.

No!—what a jump her heart gave!—it was no wilderness: there was the same figure again, stepping out on the moor. It had left the road, it was coming on with springs and leaps over the heather toward the house. Who was it? Who was it? And then he, he! held up his hand and beckoned, beckoned to Lily in the wilderness. Who was he? Nobody—a wandering traveller, a sportsman, a stranger. Her heart beat so wildly that the whole house seemed to shake with it. And there he stood among the heather, his hat off, waving it, and beckoning to her with his hand.

CHAPTER IX

The situation of Ronald Lumsden, for whom Lily felt herself to have sacrificed so much, and who showed, as she felt at the bottom of her heart, so little inclination to sacrifice any thing for her, was, in reality, a difficult one. It would have been false to say that he did not love her, that her loss was no grief to him, or that he could make himself comfortable without her—which was what various persons thought and said, and he was not unaware of the fact. Neither was he unaware that Lily herself had a half grudge, a whole consciousness, that the way out of the difficulty was a simple one; and that he should have been ready to offer her a home, even though it would not be wealthy, and the protection of a husband's name and care against all or any uncles in the world. He knew that she was quite willing to share his poverty, that she had no objection to what is metaphorically called a garret—and would really have resembled one more than is common in such cases: a little flat, high up under the roofs of an Edinburgh house—and to make it into a happy and smiling little home. And as a matter of fact that garret would not have been inappropriate, or have involved any social downfall either on his side or Lily's. Young Edinburgh advocates in those days set up their household gods in such lofty habitations without either shame or reluctance. Not so very long before the man whom we and all the world know as Lord Jeffrey set out in the world on that elevation and made his garret the centre of a new kind of empire. There was nothing derogatory in it: invitations from the best houses in Edinburgh would have found their way there as freely as to George Square; and Lily's friends and his own friends would have filled the rooms as much as if the young pair had been lodged in a palace. He could not even say to himself that there would have been privations which she did not comprehend in such a life; for, little though they had, it would have been enough for their modest wants, and there was a prospect of more if he continued to succeed as he had begun to do. Many a young man in Edinburgh had married rashly on as little and had done very well indeed. All this Ronald knew as well as any one, and the truth of it rankled in his mind and made him unhappy. And yet on the other side there was, he felt, so much to be said! Sir Robert Ramsay's fortune was not a thing to be thrown away, and to compare the interest, weight, and importance of that with the suffering involved to young people who were sure of each other in merely waiting for a year or two was absurd. According to all laws of experience and life it was absurd. Lily was very little over twenty; there was surely no hurry, no need to bring affairs to a climax, to insist on marrying when it would no doubt be better even for her to wait. This was what Lumsden said to himself. He would rather, as a matter of preference, marry at once, secure the girl he loved for his life-companion, and do the best he could for her. But when all things were considered, would it be sensible, would it be right, would it be fair?

This was how he conversed with himself during many a lonely walk, and the discussion would break out in the midst of very different thoughts, even on the pavement of the Parliament House as he paced up and down. Sir Robert's fortune—that was a tangible thing. It meant in the future, probably in the near future, for Sir Robert was a self-indulgent old man, a most excellent position in the world, safety from all pecuniary disasters, every comfort and luxury for Lily, who would then be a great lady in comparison with the struggling Edinburgh advocate. And the cost of this was nothing but a year's, a few years', waiting for a girl of twenty-two and a young man of twenty-eight. How preposterous, indeed, to discuss the question at all! If Lily had any feeling of wrong in that her lover did not carry her off, did not in a moment arrange some makeshift of a poor life, the prelude to a continual, never-ending struggle, it could only be girlish folly on Lily's part, want of power to perceive the differences and the expediences. Could any thing be more just than this reasoning? There is no one in his senses who would not agree in it. To wait a year or two at Lily's age—what more natural, more beneficial? He would have felt that he was taking advantage of her inexperience if he had urged her to marry him at such a cost. And waiting cost nothing, at least to him.

Not very long after Lily left Edinburgh Lumsden had encountered Sir Robert one evening at one of the big dinner-parties which were the old gentleman's chief pleasure, and he had taken an opportunity to address the young fellow on the subject which could not be forgotten between them. He warned Lumsden that he would permit no nonsense, no clandestine correspondence, and that it was a thing which could not be done, as his faithful servants at Dalrugas kept him acquainted with every thing that passed, and he would rather carry his niece away to England or even abroad (that word of fear and mystery) than allow her to make a silly and unequal marriage. "You are sensible enough to understand the position," the old man had said. "From all I hear of you you are no hot-headed young fool. What you would gain yourself would be only a wife quite unused to shifts and stress of weather, and probably a mere burden upon you, with her waiting-woman serving her hand and foot, and her fine-lady ways—not the useful helpmate a struggling man requires."

"I should not be afraid of that," said Lumsden, with a pale smile, for no lover, however feeble-hearted, likes to hear such an account of his love, and no youth on the verge of successful life can be any thing but impatient to hear himself described as a struggling man. "I expect to make my way in my profession, and I have reason to expect so. And Lily—"

"Miss Ramsay, if you please. She is a fine lady to the tips of her fingers. She can neither dress nor eat nor move a step without Robina at her tail. She is not fitted, I tell you, for the wife of a struggling man."

"But suppose I tell you," cried Lumsden with spirit, "that I shall be a struggling man only for a little while, and that she is in every way fitted to be *my* wife?"

"Dismiss it from your mind, sir; dismiss it from your mind," said Sir Robert. "What will the world say? and what the world says is of great consequence to a man that has to struggle, even if it is only at the beginning. They will say that you've worked upon a girl's inexperience and beguiled her to poverty. They will say that she did not know what she was doing, but you did. They will say you were a fool for your own sake, and they will say you took advantage of her."

"All which things will be untrue," said Lumsden hotly.

But then they were disturbed and no more was said. This conversation, though so brief, was enough to fill a man's mind with misgivings, at least a reasonable man's, prone to think before and not after the event. Lumsden was not one that is carried away by impulse. The first effect was that he did not write, as he had intended, to Lily. What was the use of writing if Sir Robert's faithful servants would intercept the letters? Why run any risk when there lay behind the greater danger of having her carried off to England or "abroad," where she might be lost and never heard of more? Ronald pondered all these things much, but his pondering was in different circumstances from Lily's. She had nothing to divert her mind; he had a great deal. Society had ended for her, but it was in full circulation, and he had his full share in every thing, where he was. The pressure is very different in cases so unlike. The girl had nothing to break the monotony of hour after hour, and day after day. The young man had a full and busy life: so long in the Parliament House, so long in his chambers; a consultation; a hard piece of mental work to make out a case; a cheerful dinner in the evening with some one; a wavering circle of other men always more or less surrounding him. The difficulty was not having too much time to think, but how to have time enough; and the season of occupation and company and events hurried on so that when he looked back upon a week it appeared to him like a day. And he had no way of knowing how it lingered with Lily. He wondered a little and felt it a grievance that she did not write to him, which would have been so very easy. There were no faithful servants on his side to intercept letters. She might have at least sent him a line to announce her safe arrival, and tell him how the land lay. He on his side could quite endure till the Vacation, when he had made up his mind to do something, to have news of her somehow. Even this determination made it more easy for him to defer writing, to make no attempt at communication; for why warn Sir Robert's servants and himself of what he intended to do, so that they might concert means to balk him? whereas it was

so very doubtful whether any thing he sent would reach Lily. Thus he reasoned with himself, with always the refrain that a year or two of waiting at his own age and Lily's could do no one any harm.

Yet Ronald was but mortal, though he was so wise. Sir Robert left Edinburgh, going to pay his round of visits before he went abroad, which he invariably did every autumn. There was no Monte Carlo in those days, and old gentlemen had not acquired the habit of sunning themselves on the Riviera; but, on the other hand, there was much more to attract them at the German baths, which had many of the attractions now concentrated at Monte Carlo; and Florence possessed a court and society where life went on in that round of entertainment and congregation which is essential to old persons of the world. Sir Robert disappeared some time before the circles of the Parliament House broke up, and young Lumsden was thus freed from the disagreeable consciousness of being more or less under the personal observation of his enemy. And he loved Lily, though he was willing to wait and to be temporarily separated from her in the interests of their future comfort and Sir Robert's fortune. So that, when he was released from his work, and free to direct his movements for a time as he pleased, an attraction which he could not resist led him to the place of his lady's exile. All the good reasons which his ever-working mind brought forth against this were, I am happy to say, ineffectual. He said to himself that it was a foolish thing; that if reported to Sir Robert—and how could it fail to be reported to Sir Robert, since his servants were so faithful, and it would be impossible to keep them in the dark?—would only precipitate every thing and lead to Lily's transfer to a safer hiding-place. He repeated to himself that to wait for a year or two at twenty-two and at twenty-eight was no real hardship: it was rather an advantage. But none of these wise considerations affected his mind as they ought to have done. He had a hunger and thirst upon him to see the girl he loved. He wanted to make sure that she was there, that there was a Lily in the world, that eventually she would be his and share his life. It was *plus fort que lui*.

He went home, however, as in duty bound, to the spare old house on the edge of the Highlands, where he and all his brothers and sisters had been born and bred; where there was a little shooting, soon exhausted by reason of the many guns brought to bear upon it, and a good deal of company in a homely way, impromptu dances almost every night, as is the fashion in a large family, which attracts young people round it far and near. But in all this simple jollity Ronald only felt more the absence of his love, and the vacant place in the world which could only be filled by her; though what, perhaps, had as great an effect upon him as any thing else was that his favorite sister, whom, next to her, perhaps he liked best in the world, knew about Lily, having been taken into his confidence before he had realized all the difficulties, and talked to him perpetually about her, disapproving of his inactivity and much compassionating the lonely girl. "Oh, if I were only near enough, I would go and see her and keep up her heart!" Janet Lumsden would cry, while her brother was fast getting into the condition of mind in which to see her, to make sure of her existence, was a necessity. In this condition the old house at home, with all its simple gayeties and tumult, became intolerable to him. He could have kicked the brother who demanded his sympathy in his engagement to a young lady with a fortune, neither the young lady nor the fortune being worthy to be compared to Lily, though the family was delighted by such a piece of good luck for Rob. And it set all his nerves wrong to see the flirtations that went on around him, though they were frank and simple affairs, the inevitable preferences which one boy and girl among so many would naturally show for each other. All this seemed vulgar, common, intolerable, and in the worst taste to Ronald. It was not that he was really more refined than his brothers, but that his own affairs had gone (temporarily) so wrong, and his own chosen one was so far out of the way. All the jolly, hearty winter life at home jarred on him and upset his nerves, those artificial things which did not exist in Perthshire at that period, whatever they may do now.

At last, when he could not endure it any longer, he announced that he was going a-fishing up toward the North. He was not a great fisherman, and the brothers laughed at Ronald setting out with his rod; but he had the natural gift, common to all Scotsmen of good blood, of knowing most people

throughout his native country, or at least one part of his native country, and being sure of a welcome in a hundred houses in which a son of Lumsden of Pontalloch was a known and recognizable person, though Lumsden of Pontalloch himself was by no means a rich or important man. This is an advantage which the *roturier* never acquires until at least he has passed through three or four generations. Ronald Lumsden knew that he would never be at a loss, that if rejected in one city he could flee into another, and that if any impertinent questions were put to him by Sir Robert's own faithful servants, he could always say that he was going to stay at any of the known houses within twenty miles. This hospitality perhaps exists no longer, for many of these houses now, probably the greater part of them, are let to strangers and foreigners, to whom even the native names are strange and the condition of the country means nothing. But it was so still in those days.

He set out thus, more or less at his ease, and lingered a little on his way. Then he bethought himself, or so he said, of the Rugas, in which he had fished once as a boy, and which justified him in getting off the coach at the little inn, not much better than a village public-house, where a bare room and a hard bed were to be had, and a right to fish could be negotiated for. He had a day's fishing to give himself a countenance, enquiring into the history generally of the country, and which houses were occupied, and which lairds "up for the shooting."

"Sir Robert here? Na, Sir Robert's not here. Bless us a', what would bring him here, an auld man like that, that just adores his creature comforts, and never touches a gun, good season or bad. No, he's no here, nor he hasna been here this dozen years. But I'll tell you wha's here, and that's a greater ferlie: his bonnie wee niece, Maister James's daughter, Miss Lily, as they call her. And it's no for the shooting, there's nae need to say, nor for the fishing either, poor bit thing. But what it is for is more than I can tell ye. It's just a black, burning shame—"

"Why is it a shame? Is the house haunted, or what's the matter?" Ronald said, averting his face.

"Haunted! that's a pack of havers. I'm not minding about haunted. But I tell ye what, sir, that bit lassie (and a bonnie bit lassie she is) is all her lane there, like a lily flower in the wilderness; for Lily she's called, and Lily she is—a bit willowy slender creature, bowing her head like a flower on the stalk." The landlord, who was short and red and stout, leaned his own head to one side to simulate the young lady's attitude. "She's there and never sees a single soul, and it's mair than her life's worth if ye take my opinion. If there was any body to keep her company, or even a lot of sportsmen coming and going, it would be something; but there she is, all her lane."

"Miss Ramsay! I have met her in Edinburgh," Ronald said.

"Then, if I were you, I would just take my foot in my hand and gang ower the moor and pay her a visit. She will have a grand tocher and she is a bonnie lass, and nowadays ye canna pick up an heiress at every roadside. It would be just a charity to give the poor thing a little diversion and make a fool o' yon old sneck-drawer to his very beard. Lord! but I wouldna waste a meenit if I were a young man."

Ronald laughed, but put on a virtuous mien. He said he had come for the fishing, not to pay visits, and to the fishing he would go. But when he had spent the morning on the river, it occurred to him that he might take "a look at the moor"; and this was how it was that he stole under the shadow of the bank when the last rays of the sunset were fading, and suddenly came out upon the heather under Dalrugas Tower.

CHAPTER X

Lily could not believe her eyes. That it was Ronald who approached the house, leaping over the big bushes of ling, seeking none of the little paths that ran here and there across the moor, did not occur to her. She was afraid that it was some stranger or traveller, probably an Englishman, who, seeing a woman's head at a window, thought it an appropriate occasion for impertinently attempting to attract her attention. It was considered in those days that Englishmen and wanderers unknown in the district were disposed to be jocularly uncivil when they had a chance, and indeed the excellent Beenie, who had but few personal attractions, had rarely gone out alone in Edinburgh, as Lily had often been told, without being followed by some adventurous person eager to make her acquaintance. Lily's first thought was that here must be one of Beenie's many anonymous admirers, and after having watched breathlessly up to a certain point she withdrew with a sense of offence, somewhat haughtily, surprised that she, even at this height and distance, could be taken for Beenie, or that any such methods should be adopted to approach herself. But her heart had begun to beat, she knew not why, and after a few minutes' interval she returned cautiously to the window. She did not see any one at first, and with a sigh of relief but disappointment said to herself that it was nobody, not even a lover of Beenie, who might have furnished her with a laugh, but only some passer-by pursuing his indifferent way. Then she ventured to put out her head to see where the passing figure had gone; and lo, at the foot of the tower, immediately below the window, stood he whom she believed to be so far away. There was a mutual cry of "Ronald" and "Lily," and then he cried, "Hush, hush!" in a thrilling whisper, and begged her to come out. "Only for a moment, only for a word," he cried through the pale air of the twilight. "Has any thing happened?" cried Lily, bewildered. She had no habit of the clandestine. She forgot that there was any sentence against their meeting, and felt only that when he did not come to her, but called to her to go to him, there must be something wrong.

But presently the sense of the position came back to her. Dougal and Katrin had given no sign of consciousness that any restraint was to be exercised, they had not opposed any desire of hers, or attempted to prevent her from going out as she pleased; therefore the thought that they were now themselves at supper and fully occupied, though it came into her mind, did not affect her, nor did she feel it necessary to whisper back in return. But he beckoned so eagerly that Lily yielded to his urgency. She ran down stairs, catching up a plaid as she went, and in a moment was on the moor and by Ronald's side. "At last," he said, "at last!" when the first emotion of the meeting was over.

"Oh, it is me that should say 'at last,'" said the girl; "it is not you that have been alone for weeks and weeks, banished from every thing you know: not a kent face, not a kind word, and not a letter by the post."

"I gave a promise I would not write. Indeed, I wanted to give them no handle against us, but to come the first moment I could without exciting suspicion."

"You are very feared of exciting suspicion," she said, shaking her head.

"Have I not cause? Your uncle upbraided me that I was taking advantage of your inexperience, persuading you to do things you would repent after. Can I do this, Lily? Can I lay myself open to such a reproach? Indeed, I do know the facts of things better than you."

"I don't know what you call the facts of things," she said. "Do you know the facts of this—the moor and nothing but the moor, and the two-three servants, and the beasts? Could you contrive to get your diversion out of the ways of a pony, and the cackle of the cocks and hens? Not but they are very diverting sometimes," said Lily, her heart rising. She was impatient with him. She was even angry with him. He it was who was to blame for her banishment, and he had been long, long in doing any thing to enliven it; but still he was here, and the world was changed. Her heart rose instinctively; even while she complained the things she complained of grew attractive in her eyes. The pony's humors brought smiles to her face, the moor grew fair, the diversion which she had almost resented when it

was all she had now appeared to her in a happy glow of amusement; though she was complaining in this same breath of the colorlessness of her life, it now seemed to her colorless no more.

He drew her arm more closely through his. "And do you think I had more diversion?" he asked, "feeling every street a desert and my rooms more vacant than the moor? But that's over, my Lily, Heaven be praised. I'm thought to be fishing, and fish I will, hereaway and thereaway, to give myself a countenance, but always within reach. And the moor will be paradise when you and I meet here every day."

"Oh, Ronald, if we can keep it up," Lily murmured in spite of herself.

"Why shouldn't we keep it up, as long, at least, as the Vacation lasts? After that, it is true, I'll have to go back to work; but it is a long time before that, and I will go back with a light heart to do my best, to make it possible to carry you off one day and laugh at Sir Robert, for that is what it must come to, Lily. You may have objections, but you must learn to get over them. If he stands out and will not give in to us, we must just take it in our own hands. It must come to that. I would not hurry or press a thing so displeasing if other means will do. And in the meantime we'll be very patient and try to get over your uncle by fair means. But if he is obstinate, dear, that's what it will have to come to. No need to hurry you; we're young enough. But you must prepare your mind for it, Lily, for that is what will have to come if he does not give way."

Lily clung to her lover's arm in a bewilderment of pleasure which was yet confusion of thought, as if the world had suddenly turned upside down. This was her own sentiment, which Ronald had never shared: how in a moment had it become his, changing every thing, making the present delightful and the future all hope and light? Sir Robert's fortune had, then, begun to appear to him what it had been to her, so secondary a matter! and Sir Robert himself only a relative worthy of consideration and deference, but not a tyrant obstructing all the developments of life. She could not say: "This is how I have felt all through," for, indeed, it had never been possible to her to say to him: "Take me; let us live poorly, but together," as she had always felt. Was it he who had felt this all through and not she at all? Lily was bewildered, her standing-ground seemed to have changed, the whole position was transformed. Surely it must have been she who held back, who wanted to delay and temporize, not the lover, to whom the bolder way was more natural. She did not seem to feel the ground beneath her, all had so twisted and changed. "That is what it must come to; you must prepare your mind for it, Lily." Had that solid ground been cut from under her? was she walking upon air? Her head felt a little giddy and sick in the change of the world; yet what a change! all blessedness and happiness and consolation, with no trouble in it at all.

"I have thought so sometimes myself," she said in the great bewilderment of her mind.

"But in the meantime we must be patient a little," he said. "Of course I am going to take my vacation here where we can be together. What kind of people are those servants? Do they send him word about every thing and spy upon all your movements? Never mind, I'll find a way to baffle them; I am here for the fishing, you know, and after a little while I'll find a lodging nearer, so that we may be the most of the time together while pretending to fish. If we keep up in this direction, we will be out of the reach of the windows, and you can set Beenie to keep watch and ward. For I suppose you still tell Beenie every thing, and she is as faithful to you as Sir Robert's servants are to him?"

"I have no doubt they are faithful," said Lily, a little chilled by this speech, "but they are not spies at all. They never meddle with me. I am sure they never write to him about what I am doing; besides, Sir Robert is a gentleman; he would never spy upon a girl like me."

"We must not be too sure of that. He sent you here to be spied upon, at least to be kept out of every-body's sight. I would not trust him, nor yet his servants. And I am nearer to you than Sir Robert, Lily. I am your husband that is going to be. It might be wrong for you to meet any other man, which you would never think of doing, but there's nothing wrong in meeting me."

"I never thought so," said Lily, subdued. "I am very, very glad to have you here. It will make every thing different. Only there is no need to be alarmed about Dougal and Katrin. I think they are

fonder of me than of Uncle Robert. They are not hard upon me, they are sorry for me. But never mind about that. Will you really, really give up your vacation and your shooting, and all your pleasure at home, to come here and bide with me?"

"That and a great deal more," said Ronald fervently. He felt at that moment that he could give every thing up for Lily. He was very much pleased, elevated, gratified by what he himself had said. He had taken the burden of the matter on his own shoulders, as it was fit that a man should do. He had felt when they last parted that in some way, he could not exactly say what, he had not come up to what was expected of him. He had not reached the height of Lily's ideal. But now every thing was different. He had spoken out, he had assumed a virtue of which he had not been quite sure whether he had it or not; but now he was sure. He would not forsake her, he would never ask her to wait unduly or to suffer for him now. To be sure, they would have to wait—they were young enough, there was no harm in that—but not longer than was fit, not to make her suffer. He drew her arm within his, leading her along through the intricacies of the firm turf that formed a green network of softness amid the heather. It was not for her to stumble among the big bushes of ling or spring over the tufts. His business was to guard her from all that, to lead her by the grassy paths, where her soft footsteps should find no obstacle. There is a moment in a young man's life when he thinks of this mission of his with a certain enthusiasm. Whatever else he might do, this was certainly his, to keep a woman's foot from stumbling, to smooth the way for her, to find out the easiest road. The more he did it the more he felt sure that it was his to do, and should be, through all the following years.

Lily was a long time out of doors that night. Robina came upstairs from the lengthened supper, which was one of the pleasantest moments of the day down stairs, when all the work was done, and all were free to talk and linger without any thought of the beasts or the poultry. The cows and the ponies were all suppered and put to bed. All the chickens, mothers and children, had their heads under their wings. The watchfullest of cocks was buried in sleep, the dogs were quiet on the hearthstone. Then was the time for those "cracks" which the little party loved. Beenie told her thrice-told tale of the wonders of Sir Robert's kitchen, and the goings on of Edinburgh servants, while Katrin gave forth the chronicles of the countryside, and Dougal, not to be outdone, poured forth rival recollections of things which he had seen when the laird's man, following his master afar, and of the tragedy of Mr. James, Lily's father, who had died far from home. They would sometimes talk all together without observing it, carrying on each in his various strain. And as there was nobody to interrupt, supper-time was long, and full of varied interest. Sandy, the boy, sat at the foot of the table with round and wondering eyes. But though he laid up many an image for future admiration, his interest flagged after a while, and an oft-repeated access of sleep made him the safest of listeners. "G'y way to your bed, laddie," Katrin would say, not without kindness. "Lord bless us!" cried Dougal, giving his kick of dismissal under the table. "D'ye no hear what the mistress tells ye?" But this was the only thing that disturbed the little party. And Beenie usually came upstairs to find Lily with her pale face, she who had no cronies, nor any one with whom to forget herself in talk, "wearying" for her sole attendant.

But on this night Beenie found no one there when she came upstairs, running, and a little guilty to think of the solitude of her little mistress. For a moment Beenie had a great throb of terror in her breast: the window was open, a faint and misty moon was shining forlorn over the moor, there were no candles lighted, nor sign of any living thing. Beenie coming in with her light was like a searcher for some dreadful thing, entering a place of mystery to find she knew not what. She held up her candle and cast a wild glance round the room, as if Lily might have been lying in a heap in some corner; then, with a suppressed scream, rushed into the adjacent bedroom, where the door stood open and all was emptiness. Not there, not there! The distracted woman flew to the open window with a wild apprehension that Lily, in her despair, might have thrown herself over. "Oh, Miss Lily, Miss Lily!" she cried, setting down her light and wringing her hands. Every horrible thing that could have happened rushed through Beenie's mind. "And what will they say to me, that let her bide her lane and break her heart?" she moaned within herself. And so strong was the certainty in her mind that

something dreadful had happened that when a sound struck her ear, and she turned sharp round to see the little mistress, whom she had in imagination seen laid out white and still upon her last bed, standing all radiant in life and happiness behind her, the scream which burst forth from Beenie's lips was wilder than ever. Was it Lily who stood there, smiling and shining, her eyes full of the dew of light, and every line of her countenance beaming? or was it rather Lily's glorified ghost, the spirit that had overcome all troubles of the flesh? It was the mischievous look in Lily's eyes that convinced her faithful servant that this last hypothesis could not be the explanation. For mischief surely will not shine in glorified eyes, or the blessed amuse themselves with the consternation of mortals. And Beenie's soul, so suddenly relieved of its terrors, burst out in an "Oh, Miss Lily!" the perennial remonstrance with which the elder woman had all her life protested against, yet condoned and permitted, the wayward humors of the girl.

"Well, Beenie! and how long do you think you will take to your supper another time?" Lily said.

"Oh, Miss Lily, and where have you been? I've had a fright that will make me need no more suppers as long as I live. Supper, did ye say? Me that thought that you were out of the window, lying cauld and stark at the foot of the tower. Oh, my bonnie dear, my heart's beating like a muckle drum. Where have ye been?"

"I have been on the moor," said Lily dreamily. "I've had a fine walk, half the way to the town, while you have been taken up with your bannocks and your cheese and your cracks. I had a great mind to come round to the window and put something white over my head and give you a good fright, sitting there telling stories and thinking nothing of me."

"Eh, I wasna telling stories—no me!"

Why Beenie made this asseveration I cannot tell, for she did nothing but tell stories all the time that Dougal, Katrin, and she were together; but it was natural to deny instinctively whatever accusation of neglect was brought against her. "And eh," she cried, with natural art, turning the tables, "what a time of night to be out on that weary moor, a young lady like you. Your feet will be wet with the dew, and no a thing upon your shoulders to keep you from the cold. Eh, Miss Lily, Miss Lily!" cried Robina, with all the fictitious indignation of a counter accusation, "them that has to look after you and keep you out of mischief has hard ado."

"Perhaps you will get me a little supper now that you have had plenty for yourself," said Lily, keeping up the advantage on her side. But she was another Lily from that pale flower which had looked so sadly over the moor before Robina went down stairs to her prolonged meal, a radiant creature with joy in every movement. What could it be that had happened to Lily while her faithful woman was down stairs?

CHAPTER XI

Lily kept the secret to herself as long as it was in mortal power to do so. She sent Beenie off to bed, entirely mystified and unable to explain to herself the transformation which had taken place, while she herself lay down under the canopies of the “best bed” and watched the misty moonlight on the moor, and pictured to herself that Ronald would be only now arriving, after his long walk, at his homely lodging. But what did it matter to him to be late, to walk so far, to traverse, mile after mile in the dark, that lonesome road? He was a man, and it was right and fit for him. If he had been walking half the night, it would have been just what the rural lads do, proud of their sweethearts, for whom they sacrifice half their rest.

“I’ll take my plaid and out I’ll steal,
And o’er the hills to Nannie O.”

That was the sentiment for the man, and Lily felt her heart swell with the pride of it and the satisfaction. She had thought—had she really thought it?—that he was too careful, too prudent, more concerned about her fortune than her happiness, but how false that had all been! or how different he was now! “To carry you off some day and laugh at Sir Robert, for that is what it must come to, Lily.” Ah, she had always known that this was what it must come to; but he had not seen it, or at least she had thought he did not see it in the Edinburgh days. He had learned it, however, since then, or else, which was most likely, it had always been in him, only mistaken by her or undeveloped; for it takes some time, she said to herself, before a man like Ronald, full of faith in his fellow-creatures, could believe in a tyranny like Sir Robert’s, or think that it was any thing but momentary. To think that the heartless old man should send a girl here, and then go away and probably forget all about her, leaving her to pine away in the wilderness—that was a thing that never would have entered into Ronald’s young and wholesome mind. But now he saw it all, and that passiveness which had chilled and disappointed Lily was gone. That was what it must come to. Ah, yes, it was this it must come to: independence, no waiting on an old man’s caprices, no dreadful calculations about a fortune which was not theirs, which Lily did not grudge Sir Robert, which she was willing, contemptuously, that he should do what he pleased with, which she would never buy at the cost of the happiness of her young life. And now Ronald thought so too. The little flat high up under the tiles of a tall old Edinburgh house began to appear again, looming in the air over the wild moor. What a home it would be, what a nest of love and happiness! Ronald never should repent, oh, never, never should he repent that he had chosen Lily’s love rather than Sir Robert’s fortune. How happy they would be, looking out over all the lights and shadows with the great town at their feet and all their friends around! Lily fell asleep in this beatitude of thought, and in the same awakened, wondering at herself for one moment why she should feel so happy, and then remembering with a rush of delightful retrospection. Was it possible that all the world had thus changed in a moment, that the clouds had all fled away, that these moors were no longer the wilderness, but a little outlying land of paradise, where happiness was, and every thing that was good was yet to be?

Beenie found her young mistress radiant in the morning as she had left her radiant when she went to bed. The young girl’s countenance could not contain her smiles; they seemed to ripple over, to mingle with the light, to make sunshine where there was none. What could have happened to her in that social hour when Robina was at supper with her friends, usually one of the duller of the twenty-four to lonely Lily? Whom could she have seen, what could she have heard, to light those lamps of happiness in her eyes? But Robina could not divine what it was, and Lily laughed and flouted, and reproached her with smiles always running over. “You were so busy with your supper you never looked what might be happening to me. You and Katrin and Dougal were so full of your cracks you

had no eyes for a poor lassie. I might have been lost upon the moor and you would never have found it out. But I was not lost, you see, only wonderfully diverted, and spent a happy evening, and you never knew."

"Miss Lily," said Beenie, with tears, "never more, if I should starve, will I go down to my supper again!"

"You will just go down to your supper to-night and every night, and have your cracks with Dougal and Katrin, and be as happy as you can, for I am happy too. I am lonely no more. I am just the Lily I used to be before trouble came—oh, better! for it's finer to be happy again after trouble than when you are just innocent and never have learned what it is."

"The Lord bless us all!" cried Beenie solemnly, "the bairn speaks as if she had gone, like Eve, into the thickest of the gairden and eaten of the tree—"

"So I have," said Lily. "I once was just happy like the bairn you call me, and then I was miserable. And now I know the difference, for I'm happy again, and so I will always be."

"Oh, Miss Lily," said Beenie, "to say you will always be is just flying in the face of Providence, for there is nobody in this world that is always happy. We would be mair than mortal if we could be sure of that."

"But I am sure of it," said Lily, "for what made me miserable was just misjudging a person. I thought I understood, and I didn't understand. And now I do; and if I were to live to a hundred, I would never make that mistake again. And it lies at the bottom of every thing. I may be ill, I may be poor, I may have other troubles, but I can never, never," said Lily, placing piously her hands together, "have that unhappiness which is the one that gives bitterness to all the rest—again."

"My bonnie lady! I wish I knew what you were meaning," Beenie said.

Lily kept her hands clasped and her head raised a little, as if she were saying a prayer. And then she turned with a graver countenance to her wondering maid. "Do you think," she said, "that Dougal or Katrin—but I don't think Katrin—writes to Uncle Robert and tells him every thing I do?"

"Dougal or Katrin write to Sir Robert? But what would they do that for?" said Beenie, with wide-open eyes.

"Well, I don't know—yes, I do know. I know what has been said, but I don't believe it. They say that Sir Robert's servants write every thing to him and tell all I do."

"You do nothing, Miss Lily. What should they write? What do they ken? They ken nothing. Miss Lily, Sir Robert, he's a gentleman. Do you think he would set a watch on a bit young creature like you? He may be a hard man, and no considerate, but he is not a man like that."

"That's what I said!" cried Lily; "but tell me one thing more. Do they know—did he tell them why—what for he sent me here?"

A blush and a cloud came over her sensitive face, and then a smile broke forth like the sunshine, and chased the momentary trouble away.

"Not a word, Miss Lily, not a word. Was he likely to expose himself and you, that are his nearest kin? No such thing. Many, many a wonder they have taken, and many a time they have tried to get it out of me; but I say it was just because of having no fit home for a young lady, and him aye going away to take his waters, and to play himself at divers places that were not fit for the like of you. They dinna just believe me, but they just give each other a bit look and never say a word. And it's my opinion, Miss Lily, that they're just far fonder of you, Mr. James's daughter, than they are of Sir Robert, for Dougal was Mr. James's ain man, and to betray you to your uncle, even if there was any thing to tell—which there is not, and I'm hoping never will be—is what they would not do. You said yourself you did not believe that Katrin would ever tell upon you; and I'm just as sure of Dougal, that is very fond of you, though he mayna show it. And then there's the grand security of a', Miss Lily, that there is nothing to tell."

"To be sure, that is, as you say, the grand security of all!" Then Lily's face burst into smiles, and she flung discretion to the winds. "Beenie," she said, "you would never guess. I was very lonely

at the window last night, wondering and wondering if I would just bide there all my life, and never see any body coming over the moor, when, in a moment, I saw somebody! He was standing among the heather at the foot of the tower.”

“Miss Lily!”

“Just so,” said the girl, nodding her head in the delight of her heart, “it was just—him. When every thing was at the darkest, and my heart was broken. Oh, Beenie! and it’s quite different from what I thought. I thought he was more for saving Uncle Robert’s fortune than for making me happy. I was just a fool for my pains. ‘If he stands out, we must just take it in our own hands; it must come to that; you must just prepare your mind for it, Lily.’ That was what he said, and me misjudging and making myself miserable all the time. That is why I say I will never be miserable again, for I will misjudge Ronald no more.”

“Eh, Miss Lily!” Beenie said again. Her mind was in a confusion even greater than that of her young mistress; and she did not know what to say. If Lily had misjudged him, so had she, and worse, and worse, she said to herself! Beenie had not been made miserable, however, by the mistake as Lily had been, and she was not uplifted by the discovery, if it was a discovery; a cold doubt still hovered about her heart.

“I will tell you the truth. I will not hide any thing from you,” said Lily. “He is at Kinloch-Rugas; he is staying in the very town itself. He has come here for the fishing. He’ll maybe not catch many fish, but we’ll both be happy, which is of more importance. Be as long as you like at your supper, Beenie, for then I will slip out and take my walk upon the moor, and Dougal and Katrin need never know any thing except that I am, as they think already, a silly lassie keeping daft-like hours. If they write that to Uncle Robert, what will it matter? To go out on the moor at the sunset is not silly; it is the right thing to do. And the weather is just like heaven, you know it is, one day rising after another, and never a cloud.”

“Deed, there are plenty of clouds,” said Beenie, “and soon we’ll have rain, and you cannot wander upon the moor then, not if he were the finest man in all the world.”

“We’ll wait till that time comes, and then we’ll think what’s best to do; but at present it is just the loveliest weather that ever was seen. Look at that sky,” said Lily, pointing to the vault of heavenly blue, which, indeed, was not cloudless, but better, flushed with beatific specks of white like the wings of angels. And then the girl sprang out of bed and threw herself into Robina’s arms. “Oh, I’ve been faithless, faithless!” she cried; “I’ve thought nothing but harm and ill. And I was mistaken, mistaken all the time! I could hide my face in the dust for shame, and then I could lift it up to the skies for joy. For there’s nothing matters in this world so long as them you care for are good and true and care for you. Nothing, nothing, whether it’s wealth or poverty, whether it’s parting or meeting. I thought he was thinking more of the siller than of true love. The more shame to me in my ignorance, the silly, silly thing I was. And all the time it was just the contrary, and true love was what he was thinking of, though it was only for an unworthy creature like me.”

“I wouldna be so humble as that, my bonnie dear. Ye are nane unworthy; you’re one that any person might be proud of to have for their ain. I’m saying nothing against Mr. Ronald, wha is a fine young man and just suits ye very well if every thing was according. Weel, weel, you need not take off my head. Ye can say what you like, but he would just be very suitable if he had a little more siller or a little more heart. Oh, I am not undoubting his heart in that kind of a way. He’s fond enough of you, I make no doubt of that. It’s courage is what he wants, and the heart to take things into his own hands.”

“Beenie,” said the young mistress with dignity, “when the like of you takes a stupid fit, there is nothing like your stupidity. Oh! it’s worse than that—it is a determination not to understand that takes the patience out of one. But I will not argue; I might have held my tongue and kept it all to myself, but I would not, for I’ve got a bad habit of telling you every thing. Ah! it’s a very bad habit, when you set yourself like a stone wall, and refuse to understand. Go away now, you dull woman, and

leave me alone; and if you like to betray me and him to those folk in the kitchen, you will just have to do it, for I cannot stop you; but it will be the death of me.”

“*I betray you!*” said Beenie with such a tone of injured feeling as all Lily’s caresses, suddenly bestowed in a flood, could not calm; but peace was made after a while, and Robina went forth to the world as represented by Katrin and Dougal with an increase of dignity and self-importance which these simple people could not understand.

“Bless me, you will have been hearing some grand news or other,” said Katrin.

“Me! How could I hear any news, good or bad, and me the same as in prison?” said Beenie, upon which both her companions burst into derisive laughter.

“An easy prison,” said Katrin, “where you can come and gang at your pleasure and nobody to say, ‘Where are ye gaun?’”

“You’re on your parole, Beenie,” said Dougal, “like one of the officers in the time of the war.”

“That is just it,” said Robina; “you never said a truer word. I’m just on my parole. I can go where I please, but no go away. And I can do what I please, but no what I want to do. That’s harder than stone walls and iron bars.”

“But what can ye be wanting to do sae out of the ordinary?” said Katrin. “Me, I thought we were such good friends just living very peaceable, and you content, Beenie, more or less, as weel as a middle-aged woman with nothing happening to her is like to be.”

“I wasna consulting you about my age or what I expected,” Beenie replied with quick indignation. It was a taunt that made the tears steal to her eyes. If Katrin thought it was such a great thing to be married, and that she, Robina, had not had her chance like another! But she drew herself up and added grandly: “It is my young lady that is in prison, poor thing, shut out from all her own kind. And how do I ken that you two are not just two jailers over her, keeping the poor thing fast that she should never make a step, nor see a face, but what Sir Robert would have to know?”

The two guardians of Dalrugus consulted each other with a glance. “Oh, is that hit?” said Katrin. It is seldom, very seldom, that a Scotch speaker makes any havoc with the letter *h*, but there is an occasional exception to this rule for the sake of emphasis. “Is that hit” is a stronger expression than “is that it.” It isolates the pronoun and gives it force. Dougal for his part pushed his cap off his head till it hung on by one hair. It had been Robina’s object to keep them in the dark; but her attempt was not successful. It diverted rather a stream of light upon a point which they had not yet taken into consideration at all. Many had been the wonderings at first over Lily’s arrival, and Sir Robert’s reason for sending her here, but no guidance had been afforded to the curious couple, and their speculations had died a natural death.

But Robina’s unguarded speech woke again all the echoes. “It will just be a lad, after a’,” Katrin said to her spouse, when Robina, perceiving her mistake, retired.

“I wouldna say but what it was,” answered Dougal.

“And eh, man,” said his wife, “you and me, that just stable our beasts real peaceable together, would not be the ones to make any outcry if it was a bonnie lad and one that was well meaning.”

“If the lad’s bonnie or not is naething to you or me,” said the husband.

“I’m no speaking of features, you coof, and that ye ken weel; but one that means weel and would take the poor bit motherless lassie to a hame of her ain: eh, Dougal man!” said Katrin, with the moisture in her eyes.

“How do we ken,” said Dougal, “if there is a lad—which is no way proved, but weemen’s thoughts are aye upon that kind of thing—that he is no just after Sir Robert’s fortune, and thinking very little of the bonnie lass herself?”

“Eh, but men are ill-thinking creatures,” said Katrin. “Ye ken by yourselves, and mind all the worldly meanings ye had, when a poor lass was thinking but of love and kindness. And what for should the gentleman be thinking of Sir Robert’s fortune? He has, maybe, as good a one of his ain.”

“No likely,” said Dougal, shaking his head. But he added: “I’ll no play false to Maister James’s daughter whatever, and you’ll no let me hear any clashes out of your head,” he said, with magisterial action striding away.

“When it was me that was standing up for her a’ the time!” Katrin cried with an indignation that was not without justice.

CHAPTER XII

Next night the supper was much prolonged in the kitchen at Dalrugas. The three *convives*—for Sandy tumbled off to sleep and was hustled off to bed at an early hour—told stories against each other with devotion, Katrin adding notes and elucidations to every anecdote slowly worked out by her husband, and meeting every wonder of Beenie's by a more extraordinary tale. But while they thus occupied themselves with a strong intention and meaning that Lily's freedom should be complete, the thrill of consciousness about all three was unmistakable. How it came about that they knew this to be the moment when Lily desired to be unwatched and free neither Dougal nor Katrin could have told. Lily had been roaming about the moor for a great part of the day, sometimes with Beenie, sometimes alone; but they had taken no more notice than usual. Perhaps they thought of the country custom which brings the wooer at nightfall; perhaps something magnetic was in the air. At all events this was the effect produced. They sat down in the early twilight, which had not yet quite lost its prolonged midsummer sweetness, and the moon was shining, whitening the great breadth of the moor, before they rose. They had neither heard nor seen any thing of Lily on the previous evening, though she had gone out with more haste and less precaution than now; but her movements to-night seemed to send the thrill of a pulse beating all through the gaunt, high house. Each of them heard her flit down stairs, though her step was so light. The husband and wife gave each other a glance when they heard the sound, though it was no more than the softest touch, of the big hall-door as she drew it behind her; and Beenie raised her voice instinctively to drown the noise, as if it had been something loud and violent. They all thought they heard her step upon the grass, which was impossible, and the sound of another step meeting hers. They were all conscious to their finger-tips of what poor little Lily was about, or what they thought she was about; though, indeed, Lily had flown forth like a dove, making no noise at all, even in her own excited ears.

And as for any sound of their steps upon the mossy greenness of the grass that intersected the heather, and made so soft a background for the big hummocks of the ling, there was no such thing that any but fairy ears could have heard. Ronald was standing in the same place, at the foot of the tower, when Lily flew out noiseless, with the plaid over her arm. He had brought a basket of fish, which he placed softly within the hall-door.

"You see, I am not, after all, a fisher for nothing," he whispered, as he put the soft plaid about her shoulders.

"Whisht! don't say any thing," said Lily, "till we are further off the house."

"You don't trust them, then?" he said.

"Oh, I trust them! but it's a little dreadful to think one has to trust any body and to be afraid of what a servant will say."

"So it is," he agreed, "but that is one of the minor evils we must just put up with, Lily. We would not if we could help it. Still, when your uncle compels you and me to proceedings like this, he must bear the guilt of it, if there is any guilt."

"'Guilt' is a big word," said Lily; and then she added: "I suppose it is what a great many do and think no shame."

"Shame!" he said, "for two lovers to meet that are kept apart for no reason in the world! If we were to meet Sir Robert face to face, I hope my Lily would not blush, and certainly there would be no shame in me. He dared us to it when he sent you away, and I don't see how he can expect any thing different. I would be a poor creature if, when I was free myself, I let my bonnie Lily droop alone."

"A poor Lily you would have found me if it had lasted much longer," she said, "but, oh, Ronald! never think of that now. Here we are together, and we believe in each other, which is all we want. To doubt, that is the dreadful thing—to think that perhaps there are other thoughts not like your own in his mind, and that however you may meet, and however near you may be, you never know what he

may be thinking.” Lily shuddered a little, notwithstanding that he had put the plaid so closely round her, and that her arm was within his.

“Yes,” said Ronald, “and don’t you think there might be the same dread in him? that his Lily was doubting him, not trusting, perhaps turning away to other—”

“Don’t say that, Ronald, for it is not possible. You could not ever have doubted me. Don’t say that, or I’ll never speak to you again.”

“And why not I as well as you?” said Ronald. “There is just as much occasion. I believe there is no occasion, Lily. Don’t mistake me again, but just as much occasion.”

She looked at him for a moment with her face changing as he repeated: “Just as much occasion.” And then, with a happy sigh: “Which is none,” she said.

“On either side. The one the same as the other. Promise me you will always keep to that, and never change your mind.”

She only smiled in reply; words did not seem necessary. They understood each other without any such foolish formula. And how was it possible she should change her mind? how ever go beyond that moment, which was eternity, which held all time within the bliss of its content? The entreaty to keep to that seemed to Lily to be without meaning. This was always; this was forever. Her mind could no more change than the great blue peak of Schiehallion could change, standing up against the lovely evening sky. She had recognized her mistake, with what pride and joy! and that was over forever. It was a chapter never to be opened again.

The lingering sunset died over the moor, with every shade of color that the imagination could conceive. The heather flamed now pink, now rose, now crimson, now purple; little clouds of light detached themselves from the pageant of the sunset and floated all over the blue, like rose-leaves scattered and floating on a heavenly breeze; the air over the hills thrilled with a vibration more delicate than that of the heat, but in a similar confusion, like water, above the blue edges of the mountains. Then the evening slowly dimmed, the colors going out upon the moor, tint by tint, though they still lingered in the sky; then in the east, which had grown gray and wistful, came up all at once the white glory of the moon. It was such an evening as only belongs to the North, an enchanted hour, neither night nor day, bound by no vulgar conditions, lasting forever, like Lily’s mood, no limits or boundaries to it, floating in infinite vastness and stillness between heaven and earth. The two who, being together, perfected this spotless period, wandered over all the moor, not thinking where they were going, winding out and in among the bushes of the heather, wherever the spongy turf would bear a footstep. They forgot that they were afraid of being seen: but, indeed, there was nobody to see them, not a soul on the high-road nor on the moor. They forgot all chances of betrayal, all doubts about Sir Robert’s servants, every thing, indeed, except that they were together and had a thousand things to say to each other, or nothing at all to say to each other, as happened, the silence being as sweet as the talk, and the pair changing from one to the other as caprice dictated: now all still breathing like one being, now garrulous as the morning birds. They forgot themselves so far that, after two or three false partings, Ronald taking Lily home, then Lily accompanying Ronald back again to the edge of the moor, he walked with her at last to the very foot of the tower, from whence he had first called her, though there were audible voices just round the corner, clearly denoting that the other inmates were taking a breath of air after their supper at the ha’-door. There was almost a pleasure in the risk, in coming close up to those by-standers, yet unseen, and whispering the last good-night almost within reach of their ears.

“I do not see why I should carry on the farce of fishing all day long,” said Ronald, “and see you only in the evening. You can get out as easily in the afternoon as in the evening, Lily.”

“Oh, yes, quite as easy. Nobody minds me where I go.”

“Then come down to the waterside. It is not too far for you to walk. I will be by way of fishing up the stream; and I will bring my lunch in my pocket and we will have a little picnic together, you and me.”

"I will do that, Ronald; but the evening is the bonnie time. The afternoon is just vulgar day, and this is the enchanted time. It is all poetry now."

"It is you that are the poetry, Lily. Me, I'm only common flesh and blood."

"It is the two of us that make the poetry," said Lily; "but the afternoon will be fine, too, and I will come. I will allow you to catch no fish—little bonnie things, why should they not be happy in the water, like us on the bank?"

"I like very well to see them in the basket, and to feel I have been so clever as to catch them," said Ronald.

"And so do I," cried Lily, with a laugh so frank that they were both startled into silence, feeling that the audience round the corner had stopped their talk to listen. This, the reader will see not all protestations, not all sighs of sentiment, was the manner of their talk before they finally parted, Ronald making a long circuit so as to emerge unseen and lower down upon the high-road, on the other side of the moor. Was it necessary to make any such make-believe? Lily walked round the corner, with a blush yet a smile, holding her head high, looking her possible critics in the face. It was Dougal and Katrin, who had come out of doors to breathe the air after their supper, and to see the bonnie moor. Within, in the shadow of the stairs, was a vision of Beenie, very nervous, her eyes round and shining with eagerness and suspense. Lily coming in view, all radiant in the glory of her youth, full of happiness, full of life, too completely inspired and lighted up with the occasion to take any precautions of concealment, was like a revelation. She was youth and joy and love impersonified, coming out upon the lower level of common life, which was all these good people knew, like a star out of the sky. Katrin, arrested in the question on her lips, gazed at her with a woman's ready perception of the new and wonderful atmosphere about her. Dougal, half as much impressed, but not knowing why, pushed his cap on one side as usual, inserting an interrogative finger among the masses of his grizzled hair.

"So you've been taking your walk, Miss Lily," said Katrin, subdued out of the greater vigor of remark which she had been about to use.

"Yes, Katrin, while you have been having your supper. Your voices sound very nice down stairs when you are having your cracks, but they make me feel all the more lonely by myself. It's more company on the moor," Lily said, with an irrestrainable laugh. She meant, I suppose, to deceive—that is, she had no desire to betray herself to those people who might betray her—but she was so unused to any kind of falsehood that she brought out her ambiguous phrase so as to make it imply, if not express, the truth.

"I am glad you should find it company, Miss Lily. It's awfu' bonnie and fresh and full of fine smells, the gale under your foot, and the wholesome heather, and a' thae bonnie little flowers."

"Losh me! I would find them puir company for my part," said Dougal; "but there is, maybe—"

"Hold your peace, you coof. Do ye think the like of you can faddom a young leddy that is just close kin to every thing that's bonnie? You, an auld gillie, a Highland tyke, a—"

"Don't abuse Dougal, though you have paid me the prettiest compliment. Could I have the powny to-morrow, Dougal, to go down the water a bit? and I will take a piece with me, Katrin, in case I should be late; and then you need never fash your heads about me whether I come in to dinner or not."

"My bonnie leddy, I like every-body to come in to their denner," said Katrin, with a cloud upon her face.

"So do I, in a usual way. But I have been here a long time. How long, Beenie? A whole month, fancy that! and they tell me there is a very bonnie glen down by the old bridge that people go to see."

"So there is, a real bonnie bit. I'll take ye there some day mysel', and Beenie, she can come in the cairt with the black powny gin she likes. She'll mind it well; a' the bairns are keen to gang in the vacance to the Fairy Glen."

"I'll not wait for Beenie this time, or you either, Dougal," said Lily, again with a laugh. "I will just take Rory for my guide and find it out for myself. I think," she added, with a deeper blush and a faltering voice, "that Miss Helen from the Manse—"

She did not get far enough to tell that faltering fib. "Oh, if you are to be with Miss Eelen! Miss Eelen knows every corner of the Fairy Glen. I will be very easy in my mind," said Katrin, "if Miss Eelen's there; and I'll put up that cold chicken in a basket, and ye shall have a nice lunch as ever two such nice creatures could sit down to. But ye'll mind not to wet your feet, nor climb up the broken arch of the auld brig yonder. Eh, but that's an exploit for a stirring boy, and no a diversion for leddies. And ye'll just give the powny a good feed, and take him out a while in the morning, Dougal, that he mayna be too fresh."

"I'm just thinking," said Dougal, "there's a dale to do the morn; but if ye were to wait till the day after, I could spare the time, Miss Lily, to take you mysel'."

"And if it's just preceesely the morn that Miss Eelen's coming!" cried Katrin, with great and solid effect, while Lily, alarmed, began to explain and deprecate, pleading that she could find the way herself so easily, and would not disturb Dougal for the world. She hurried in after this little episode to avoid any further dangers, to be met by Beenie's round eyes and troubled face in the dark under the stair. "Oh, Miss Lily!" Beenie cried, putting a hand of remonstrance on her arm, which Lily shook off and flew upstairs, very happy, it must be allowed, in her first attempt at deceit. Robina looked more scared and serious than ever when she appeared with a lighted candle in the drawing-room, shaking her solemn head. Her eyes were so round, and her look so solemn, that she looked not unlike a large white owl in the imperfect light, and so Lily told her with a tremulous laugh, to avert, if possible, the coming storm. But Beenie's storm, though confused and full of much vague rumble of ineffectual thunder, was not to be averted. She repeated her undefined but powerful remonstrance, "Oh, Miss Lily!" as she set down the one small candle in the midst of the darkness, with much shaking of her head.

"Well, what is it? Stop shaking your head, or you will shake it off, and you and me will break our backs looking for it on the floor, and speak out your mind and be done with it!" cried Lily, stamping her foot upon the carpet. Robina made a solemn pause, before she repeated, still more emphatically, her "Oh, Miss Lily!" again.

"To bring in Miss Eelen's name, puir thing, puir thing, that has nothing to do with such vanities, just to give ye a countenance and be a screen to you, and you going to meet your lad, and no leddy near ye at a'."

"Don't speak so loud!" cried Lily with an affectation of alarm; and then she added: "I never said Helen was coming; I only—"

"Put it so that Katrin thought that was what you meant. Oh, I ken fine! It's no a falsehood, you say, but it's a falsehood you put into folk's heads. And, 'deed, Katrin was a great fool to take heed for a moment of what you said, when it was just written plain in your eyes and every line of your countenance, and the very gown on your back, that you had come from a meeting with your lad!"

"I wish you would not use such common words, Beenie! as if I were the house-maid meeting my lad!"

"I fail to see where the difference lies," said Beenie with dignity; "the thing's just the same. You're maybe no running the risks a poor lass runs, that has naebody to take care of her. But this is no more than the second time he's come, and lo! there's a wall of lees rising round your feet already, trippin' ye up at every step. What will ye say to Katrin, Miss Lily, the morn's night when ye come hame? Will ye keep it up and pretend till her that Miss Eelen's met ye at the auld brig? or will ye invent some waur story to account for her no coming? or what, I ask ye, will ye do?"

"Katrin," said Lily, with burning cheeks, but a haughty elevation of the head, "has no right to cross-question me."

"Nor me either, Miss Lily, ye will be thinking?"

"It does not matter what I'm thinking. She is one thing and you are another. I have told you— Oh, Beenie, Beenie," cried the girl suddenly, "why do you begin to make objections so soon? What am I doing more than other girls do? Who is it I am deceiving? Nobody! Uncle Robert wanted to

make me promise I would give him up, but I would not promise. I never said I would not see him and speak to him and make him welcome if he came to me; there was never a word of that between us. And as for Katrin!" cried Lily with scorn. "Why, Grace Scott met Robbie Burns out at Duddingston, and told her mother she had only been walking with her cousin, and you just laughed when you told me. And her mother! very different, very different from Katrin. You said what an ill lassie! but you laughed and you said Mrs. Scott was wrong to force them to it. That was all the remark you made, Robina, my dear woman," said Lily, recovering her spirit; "so I am not going to put up with any criticism from you."

"Oh, Miss Lily!" Robina said. But what could she add to this mild remonstrance, having thus been convicted of a sympathy with the vagaries of lovers which she did not, indeed, deny? And it cannot be said that poor Lily's suggested falsehood did much harm. Katrin, for her part, had very little faith in Miss Eelen as the companion of the young lady's ramble. She too shook her head as she packed her basket. "I see now," she said, "the meaning o't, which is aye a satisfaction. It's some fine lad that hasna siller enough to please Sir Robert. And he's come after her, and they're counting on a wheen walks and cracks together, poor young things. Maybe if she had had a mother it would have been different, or if poor Mr. James had lived, poor man, to take care of his ain bit bairn. Sir Robert's a dour auld carl; he's not one I would put such a charge upon. What does he ken about a young leddy's heart, poor thing? But they shall have a good lunch whatever," the good woman said.

And when the sun was high over the moor and every thing shining, not too hot nor too bright, the tempered and still-breathing noon of the North, Lily set out upon her pony with the basket by her saddle, and all the world smiling and inviting before her. Never had such a daring and delightful holiday dawned upon her before. Almost a whole day to spend together, Ronald all that she dreamed, and not an inquisitive or unkindly eye to look upon them, not even Beenie to disturb their absorption in each other. She waved her whip in salutation to the others behind as they stood watching her set out. "A bonnie day to ye, Miss Lily," cried Katrin. "And you'll no be late?" said anxious Beenie. "'Od," cried Dougal, with his cap on his ear, "I wish I had just put off thae potataies and gone with her mysel'—" "Ye fuil!" said his wife, and said no further word. And Lily rode away in heavenly content and expectation over the moor.

CHAPTER XIII

The day was one of those Highland days which are a dream of freshness and beauty and delight. I do not claim that they are very frequent, but sometimes they will occur in a cluster, two or three together, like a special benediction out of heaven. The sun has a purity, a clearness, an ecstasy of light which it has nowhere else. It looks, as it were, with a heavenly compunction upon earth and sky, as if to make up for the many days when it is absent, expanding over mountain and moor with a smiling which seems personal and full of intention. The air is life itself, uncontaminated with any evil emanation, full of the warmth of the sun, and the odor of the fir-trees and heather, and the murmur of all the living things about. The damp and dew which linger in the shady places disappear as if by magic. No unkindly creature, no venomous thing, is abroad; no noise, no jar of living, though every thing lives and grows and makes progress with such silent and smiling vigor. The two lovers in the midst of this incense-breathing nature, so still, yet so strong, so peaceful, yet so vigorous, felt that the scene was made for them, that no surroundings could have been more fitly prepared and tempered for the group which was as the group in Eden before trouble came. They wandered about together through the glen, and by the side of the shining brown trout stream, which glowed and smiled among the rocks, reflecting every ray and every cloud as it hurried and sparkled along, always in haste, yet always at leisure. They lingered here and there, in a spot which was still more beautiful than all the others, though not so beautiful as the next, which tempted them a little further on. Sometimes Ronald's rod was taken out and screwed together; sometimes even flung over a dark pool, where there were driftings and leapings of trout, but pulled in again before, as Lily said, any harm was done. "For why should any peaceful creature get a sharp hook in its jaw because you and me are happy?" she said. "That's no reason." Ronald, but for the pride of having something to carry back in his basket, was much of her opinion. He was not a devoted fisherman. Their happiness was no reason, clearly, for interfering with that of the meanest thing that lived. And they talked about every thing in heaven and earth, not only of their own affairs, though they were interesting enough. Lily, who for a month had spoken to nobody except Beenie, save for that one visit to the Manse, had such an accumulation of remark and observation to get through on her side, and so much to demand from him, that the moments, and, indeed, the hours, flew. It is astonishing, even without the impulse of a long parting and sudden meeting, what wells of conversation flow forth between two young persons in their circumstances. Perhaps it would not sound very wise or witty if any cool spectator listened, but it is always delightful to the people concerned, and Lily was not the first comer, so to speak. She was full of variety, full of whim and fancy, no heaviness or monotony in her. Perhaps this matters less at such a moment of life than at any other. The dullest pair find the art of entertaining each other, of keeping up their mutual interest. And now that the cold chill of doubt in respect to Ronald was removed from her mind Lily flowed like the trout stream, as dauntless and as gay, reflecting every gleam of light.

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