

**GEORGE
MACDONALD**

WHAT'S
MINE'S MINE —
VOLUME 3

George MacDonald

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Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	8
CHAPTER III	11
CHAPTER IV	16
CHAPTER V	20
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	23

George MacDonald

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CHAPTER I

AT A HIGH SCHOOL

When Mercy was able to go down to the drawing-room, she found the evenings pass as never evenings passed before; and during the day, although her mother and Christina came often to see her, she had time and quiet for thinking. And think she must; for she found herself in a region of human life so different from any she had hitherto entered, that in no other circumstances would she have been able to recognize even its existence. Everything said or done in it seemed to acknowledge something understood. Life went on with a continuous lean toward something rarely mentioned, plainly uppermost; it embodied a tacit reference of everything to some code so thoroughly recognized that occasion for alluding to it was unfrequent. Its inhabitants appeared to know things which her people did not even suspect. The air of the brothers especially was that of men at their ease yet ready to rise—of men whose loins were girded, alert for an expected call.

Under their influence a new idea of life, and the world, and the relations of men and things, began to grow in the mind of Mercy. There was a dignity, almost grandeur, about the simple life of the cottage, and the relation of its inmates to all they came near. No one of them seemed to live for self, but each to be thinking and caring for the others and for the clan. She awoke to see that manners are of the soul; that such as she had hitherto heard admired were not to be compared with the simple, almost peasant-like dignity and courtesy of the chief; that the natural grace, accustomed ease, and cultivated refinement of Ian's carriage, came out in attention and service to the lowly even more than in converse with his equals; while his words, his gestures, his looks, every expression born of contact, witnessed a directness and delicacy of recognition she could never have imagined. The moment he began to speak to another, he seemed to pass out of himself, and sit in the ears of the other to watch his own words, lest his thoughts should take such sound or shape as might render them unwelcome or weak. If they were not to be pleasant words, they should yet be no more unpleasant than was needful; they should not hurt save in the nature of that which they bore; the truth should receive no injury by admixture of his personality. He heard with his own soul, and was careful over the other soul as one of like kind. So delicately would he initiate what might be communion with another, that to a nature too dull or selfish to understand him, he gave offence by the very graciousness of his approach.

It was through her growing love to Alister that Mercy became able to understand Ian, and perceived at length that her dread, almost dislike of him at first, was owing solely to her mingled incapacity and unworthiness. Before she left the cottage, it was spring time in her soul; it had begun to put forth the buds of eternal life. Such buds are not unfrequently nipped; but even if they are, if a dull, false, commonplace frost close in, and numb the half wakened spirit back into its wintry sleep, that sleep will ever after be haunted with some fainting airs of the paradise those buds prophesied. In Mercy's case they were to grow into spiritual eyes—to open and see, through all the fogs and tumults of this phantom world, the light and reality of the true, the spiritual world everywhere around her—as the opened eyes of the servant of the prophet saw the mountains of Samaria full of horses of fire and chariots of fire around him. Every throb of true love, however mingled with the foolish and the false, is a bourgeoning of the buds of the life eternal—ah, how far from leaves! how much farther from flowers.

Ian was high above her, so high that she shrank from him; there seemed a whole heaven of height between them. It would fill her with a kind of despair to see him at times sit lost in thought: he

was where she could never follow him! He was in a world which, to her childish thought, seemed not the world of humanity; and she would turn, with a sense of both seeking and finding, to the chief. She imagined he felt as she did, saw between his brother and him a gulf he could not cross. She did not perceive this difference, that Alister knew the gulf had to be crossed. At such a time, too, she had seen his mother regarding him with a similar expression of loss, but with a mingling of anxiety that was hers only. It was sweet to Mercy to see in the eyes of Alister, and in his whole bearing toward his younger brother, that he was a learner like herself, that they were scholars together in Ian's school.

A hunger after something beyond her, a something she could not have described, awoke in her. She needed a salvation of some kind, toward which she must grow! She needed a change which she could not understand until it came—a change the greatest in the universe, but which, man being created with the absolute necessity for it, can be no violent transformation, can be only a grand process in the divine idea of development.

She began to feel a mystery in the world, and in all the looks of it—a mystery because a meaning. She saw a jubilation in every sunrise, a sober sadness in every sunset; heard a whispering of strange secrets in the wind of the twilight; perceived a consciousness of unknown bliss in the song of the lark;—and was aware of a something beyond it all, now and then filling her with wonder, and compelling her to ask, "What does it, what can it mean?" Not once did she suspect that Nature had indeed begun to deal with her; not once suspect, although from childhood accustomed to hear the name of Love taken in vain, that love had anything to do with these inexplicable experiences.

Let no one, however, imagine he explains such experiences by suggesting that she was in love! That were but to mention another mystery as having introduced the former. For who in heaven or on earth has fathomed the marvel betwixt the man and the woman? Least of all the man or the woman who has not learned to regard it with reverence. There is more in this love to uplift us, more to condemn the lie in us, than in any other inborn drift of our being, except the heavenly tide Godward. From it flow all the other redeeming relations of life. It is the hold God has of us with his right hand, while death is the hold he has of us with his left. Love and death are the two marvels, yea the two terrors—but the one goal of our history.

It was love, in part, that now awoke in Mercy a hunger and thirst after heavenly things. This is a direction of its power little heeded by its historians; its earthly side occupies almost all their care. Because lovers are not worthy of even its earthly aspect, it palls upon them, and they grow weary, not of love, but of their lack of it. The want of the heavenly in it has caused it to perish: it had no salt. From those that have not is taken away that which they have. Love without religion is the plucked rose. Religion without love—there is no such thing. Religion is the bush that bears all the roses; for religion is the natural condition of man in relation to the eternal facts, that is the truths, of his own being. To live is to love; there is no life but love. What shape the love puts on, depends on the persons between whom is the relation. The poorest love with religion, is better, because truer, therefore more lasting, more genuine, more endowed with the possibility of persistence—that is, of infinite development, than the most passionate devotion between man and woman without it.

Thus together in their relation to Ian, it was natural that Mercy and the chief should draw yet more to each other. Mercy regarded Alister as a big brother in the same class with herself, but able to help her. Quickly they grew intimate. In the simplicity of his large nature, the chief talked with Mercy as openly as a boy, laying a heart bare to her such that, if the world had many like it, the kingdom of heaven would be more than at hand. He talked as to an old friend in perfect understanding with him, from whom he had nothing to gain or to fear. There was never a compliment on the part of the man, and never a coquetry on the part of the girl—a dull idea to such as without compliment or coquetry could hold no intercourse, having no other available means. Mercy had never like her sister cultivated the woman's part in the low game; and her truth required but the slightest stimulus to make her incapable of it. With such a man as Alister she could use only a simplicity like his; not thus to meet him would have been to decline the honouring friendship. Dark and plain, though with an

interesting face and fine eyes, she had received no such compliments as had been showered upon her sister; it was an unspoiled girl, with a heart alive though not yet quite awake, that was brought under such good influences. What better influences for her, for any woman, than those of unselfish men? what influences so good for any man as those of unselfish women? Every man that hears and learns of a worthy neighbour, comes to the Father; every man that hath heard and learned of the Father comes to the Lord; every man that comes to the Lord, he leads back to the Father. To hear Ian speak one word about Jesus Christ, was for a true man to be thenceforth truer. To him the Lord was not a theological personage, but a man present in the world, who had to be understood and obeyed by the will and heart and soul, by the imagination and conscience of every other man. If what Ian said was true, this life was a serious affair, and to be lived in downright earnest! If God would have his creatures mind him, she must look to it! She pondered what she heard. But she went always to Alister to have Ian explained; and to hear him talk of Ian, revealed Alister to her.

When Mercy left the cottage, she felt as if she were leaving home to pay a visit. The rich house was dull and uninteresting. She found that she had immediately to put in practice one of the lessons she had learned—that the service of God is the service of those among whom he has sent us. She tried therefore to be cheerful, and even to forestall her mother's wishes. But life was harder than hitherto—so much more was required of her.

The chief was falling thoroughly in love with Mercy, but it was some time before he knew it. With a heart full of tenderness toward everything human, he knew little of love special, and was gradually sliding into it without being aware of it. How little are we our own! Existence is decreed us; love and suffering are appointed us. We may resist, we may modify; but we cannot help loving, and we cannot help dying. We need God to keep us from hating. Great in goodness, yea absolutely good, God must be, to have a right to make us—to compel our existence, and decree its laws! Without his choice the chief was falling in love. The woman was sent him; his heart opened and took her in. Relation with her family was not desirable, but there she was! Ian saw, but said nothing. His mother saw it too.

"Nothing good will come of it!" she said, with a strong feeling of unfitness in the thing.

"Everything will come of it, mother, that God would have come of it," answered Ian. "She is an honest, good girl, and whatever comes of it must be good, whether pleasant or not."

The mother was silent. She believed in God, but not so thoroughly as to abjure the exercise of a subsidiary providence of her own. The more people trust in God, the less will they trust their own judgments, or interfere with the ordering of events. The man or woman who opposes the heart's desire of another, except in aid of righteousness, is a servant of Satan. Nor will it avail anything to call that righteousness which is of Self or of Mammon.

"There is no action in fretting," Ian would say, "and not much in the pondering of consequences. True action is the doing of duty, come of it heartache, defeat, or success."

"You are a fatalist, Ian!" said his mother one day.

"Mother, I am; the will of God is my fate!" answered Ian. "He shall do with me what he pleases; and I will help him!"

She took him in her arms and kissed him. She hoped God would not be strict with him, for might not the very grandeur of his character be rooted in rebellion? Might not some figs grow on some thistles?

At length came the paternal summons for the Palmers to go to London. For a month the families had been meeting all but every day. The chief had begun to look deep into the eyes of the girl, as if searching there for some secret joy; and the girl, though she drooped her long lashes, did not turn her head away. And now separation, like death, gave her courage, and when they parted, Mercy not only sustained Alister's look, but gave him such a look in return that he felt no need, no impulse to say anything. Their souls were satisfied, for they knew they belonged to each other.

CHAPTER II

A TERRIBLE DISCOVERY

So entirely were the chief and his family out of the world, that they had not yet a notion of the worldly relations of Mr. Peregrine Palmer. But the mother thought it high time to make inquiry as to his position and connections. She had an old friend in London, the wife of a certain vice-chancellor, with whom she held an occasional correspondence, and to her she wrote, asking if she knew anything of the family.

Mrs. Macruadh was nowise free from the worldliness that has regard to the world's regard. She would not have been satisfied that a daughter in law of hers should come of people distinguished for goodness and greatness of soul, if they were, for instance, tradespeople. She would doubtless have preferred the daughter of an honest man, whatever his position, to the daughter of a scoundrel, even if he chanced to be a duke; but she would not have been content with the most distinguished goodness by itself. Walking after Jesus, she would have drawn to the side of Joanna rather than Martha or Mary; and I fear she would have condescended—just a little—to Mary Magdalen: repentance, however perfect, is far from enough to satisfy the worldly squeamishness of not a few high-principled people who do not know what repentance means.

Mrs. Macruadh was anxious to know that the girl was respectable, and so far worthy of her son. The idea of such an inquiry would have filled Mercy's parents with scornful merriment, as a thing ludicrous indeed. People in THEIR position, who could do this and that, whose name stood so high for this and that, who knew themselves well bred, who had one relation an admiral, another a general, and a marriage-connection with some of the oldest families in the country—that one little better than a yeoman, a man who held the plough with his own big hands, should enquire into THEIR social standing! Was not Mr. Peregrine Palmer prepared to buy him up the moment he required to sell! Was he not rich enough to purchase an earl's daughter for his son, and an earl himself for his beautiful Christina! The thing would have seemed too preposterous.

The answer of the vice-chancellor's lady burst, nevertheless, like a bombshell in the cottage. It was to this effect:—The Palmers were known, if not just in the best, yet in very good society; the sons bore sign of a defective pedigree, but the one daughter out was, thanks to her mother, fit to go anywhere. For her own part, wrote the London correspondent, she could not help smelling the grains: in Scotland a distiller, Mr. Peregrine Palmer had taken to brewing in England—was one of the firm Pulp and Palmer, owning half the public-houses in London, therefore high in the regard of the English nobility, if not actually within their circle.—Thus far the satirical lady of the vice-chancellor.

Horror fell upon the soul of the mother. The distiller was to her as the publican to the ancient Jew. No dealing in rags and marine stores, no scraping of a fortune by pettifogging, chicane, and cheating, was to her half so abominable as the trade of a brewer. Worse yet was a brewer owning public-houses, gathering riches in half-pence wet with beer and smelling of gin. The brewer was to her a moral pariah; only a distiller was worse. As she read, the letter dropped from her hands, and she threw them up in unconscious appeal to heaven. She saw a vision of bloated men and white-faced women, drawing with trembling hands from torn pockets the money that had bought the wide acres of the Clanruadh. To think of the Macruadh marrying the daughter of such a man! In society few questions indeed were asked; everywhere money was counted a blessed thing, almost however made; none the less the damnable fact remained, that certain moneys were made, not in furthering the well-being of men and women, but in furthering their sin and degradation. The mother of the chief saw that, let the world wink itself to blindness, let it hide the roots of the money-plant in layer upon layer of social ascent, the flower for which an earl will give his daughter, has for the soil it grows in, not

the dead, but the diseased and dying, of loathsome bodies and souls of God's men and women and children, which the grower of it has helped to make such as they are.

She was hot, she was cold; she started up and paced hurriedly about the room. Her son the son in law of a distiller! the husband of his daughter! The idea was itself abhorrence and contempt! Was he not one of the devil's fishers, fishing the sea of the world for the souls of men and women to fill his infernal ponds withal! His money was the fungous growth of the devil's cellars. How would the brewer or the distiller, she said, appear at the last judgment! How would her son hold up his head, if he cast in his lot with theirs! But that he would never do! Why should she be so perturbed! in this matter at least there could be no difference between them! Her noble Alister would be as much shocked as herself at the news! Could the woman be a lady, grown on such a hot-bed! Yet, alas! love could tempt far—could subdue the impossible!

She could not rest; she must find one of them! Not a moment longer could she remain alone with the terrible disclosure. If Alister was in love with the girl, he must get out of it at once! Never again would she enter the Palmers' gate, never again set foot on their land! The thought of it was unthinkable! She would meet them as if she did not see them! But they should know her reason—and know her inexorable!

She went to the edge of the ridge, and saw Ian sitting with his book on the other side of the burn. She called him to her, and handed him the letter. He took it, read it through, and gave it her back.

"Ian!" she exclaimed, "have you nothing to say to that?"

"I beg your pardon, mother," he answered: "I must think about it. Why should it trouble you so! It is painfully annoying, but we have come under no obligation to them!"

"No; but Alister!"

"You cannot doubt Alister will do what is right!"

"He will do what he thinks right!"

"Is not that enough, mother?"

"No," she answered angrily; "he must do the thing that is right."

"Whether he knows it or not? Could he do the thing he thought wrong?"

She was silent.

"Mother dear," resumed Ian, "the only Way to get at what IS right is to do what seems right. Even if we mistake there is no other way!"

"You would do evil that good may come! Oh, Ian!"

"No, mother; evil that is not seen to be evil by one willing and trying to do right, is not counted evil to him. It is evil only to the person who either knows it to be evil, or does not care whether it be or not."

"That is dangerous doctrine!"

"I will go farther, mother, and say, that for Alister to do what you thought right, if he did not think it right himself—even if you were right and he wrong—would be for him to do wrong, and blind himself to the truth."

"A man may be to blame that he is not able to see the truth," said the mother.

"That is very true, but hardly such a man as Alister, who would sooner die than do the thing he believed wrong. But why should you take it for granted that Alister will think differently from you?"

"We don't always think alike."

"In matters of right and wrong, I never knew him or me think differently from you, mother!"

"He is very fond of the girl!"

"And justly. I never saw one more in earnest, or more anxious to learn."

"She might well be teachable to such teachers!"

"I don't see that she has ever sought to commend herself to either of us, mother. I believe her heart just opened to the realities she had never had shown her before. Come what may, she will never forget the things we have talked about."

"Nothing would make me trust her!"

"Why?"

"She comes of an' abominable breed."

"Is it your part, mother, to make her suffer for the sins of her fathers?"

"I make her suffer!"

"Certainly, mother—by changing your mind toward her, and suspecting her, the moment you learn cause to condemn her father."

"The sins of the fathers are visited on the children!—You will not dispute that?"

"I will grant more—that the sins of the fathers are often reproduced in the children. But it is nowhere said, 'Thou shalt visit the sins of the fathers on the children.' God puts no vengeance into our hands. I fear you are in danger of being unjust to the girl, mother!—but then you do not know her so well as we do!"

"Of course not! Every boy understands a woman better than his mother!"

"The thing is exceedingly annoying, mother! Let us go and find Alister at once!"

"He will take it like a man of sense, I trust!"

"He will. It will trouble him terribly, but he will do as he ought. Give him time and I don't believe there is a man in the world to whom the right comes out clearer than to Alister."

The mother answered only with a sigh.

"Many a man," remarked Ian, "has been saved through what men call an unfortunate love affair!"

"Many a man has been lost by having his own way in one!" rejoined the mother.

"As to LOST, I would not make up my mind about that for a few centuries or so!" returned Ian. "A man may be allowed his own way for the discipline to result from it."

"I trust, Ian, you will not encourage him in any folly!"

"I shall have nothing to do but encourage him in his first resolve, mother!"

CHAPTER III

HOW ALISTER TOOK IT

They could not find Alister, who had gone to the smithy. It was tea-time before he came home. As soon as he entered, his mother handed him the letter.

He read it without a word, laid it on the table beside his plate, and began to drink his tea, his eyes gleaming with a strange light, Ian kept silence also. Mrs. Macruadh cast a quick glance, now at the one, now at the other. She was in great anxiety, and could scarce restrain herself. She knew her boys full of inbred dignity and strong conscience, but was nevertheless doubtful how they would act. They could not feel as she felt, else would the hot blood of their race have at once boiled over! Had she searched herself she might have discovered a latent dread that they might be nearer the right than she. Painfully she watched them, half conscious of a traitor in her bosom, judging the world's judgment and not God's. Her sons seemed on the point of concluding as she would not have them conclude: they would side with the young woman against their mother!

The reward of parents who have tried to be good, may be to learn, with a joyous humility from their children. Mrs. Macruadh was capable of learning more, and was now going to have a lesson.

When Alister pushed back his chair and rose, she could refrain no longer. She could not let him go in silence. She must understand something of what was passing in his mind!

"What do you think of THAT, Alister?" she said.

He turned to her with a faint smile, and answered,

"I am glad to know it, mother."

"That is good. I was afraid it would hurt you!"

"Seeing the thing is so, I am glad to be made aware of it. The information itself you cannot expect me to be pleased with!"

"No, indeed, my son! I am very sorry for you. After being so taken with the young woman,—"
Alister looked straight in his mother's face.

"You do not imagine, mother," he said, "it will make any difference as to Mercy?"

"Not make any difference!" echoed Mrs. Macruadh. "What is it possible you can mean, Alister?"

The anger that glowed in her dark eyes made her look yet handsomer, proving itself not a mean, though it might be a misplaced anger.

"Is she different, mother, from what she was before you had the letter?"

"You did not then know what she was!"

"Just as well as I do now. I have no reason to think she is not what I thought her."

"You thought her the daughter of a gentleman!"

"Hardly. I thought her a lady, and such I think her still."

"Then you mean to go on with it?"

"Mother dear," said Alister, taking her by the hand, "give me a little time. Not that I am in any doubt—but the news has been such a blow to me that—"

"It must have been!" said the mother.

"—that I am afraid of answering you out of the soreness of my pride, and Ian says the Truth is never angry."

"I am quite willing you should do nothing in a hurry," said the mother.

She did not understand that he feared lest, in his indignation for Mercy, he should answer his mother as her son ought not.

"I will take time," he replied. "And here is Ian to help me!"

"Ah! if only your father were here!"

"He may be, mother! Anyhow I trust I shall do nothing he would not like!"

"He would sooner see son of his marry the daughter of a cobbler than of a brewer!"

"So would I, mother!" said Alister.

"I too," said Ian, "would much prefer that my sister-in-law's father were not a brewer."

"I suppose you are splitting some hair, Ian, but I don't see it," remarked his mother, who had begun to gather a little hope. "You will be back by supper-time, Alister, I suppose?"

"Certainly, mother. We are only going to the village."

The brothers went.

"I knew everything you were thinking," said Ian.

"Of course you did!" answered Alister.

"But I am very sorry!"

"So am I! It is a terrible bore!"

A pause followed. Alister burst into a laugh that was not merry.

"It makes me think of the look on my father's face," he said, "once at the market, as he was putting in his pocket a bunch of more than usually dirty bank-notes. The look seemed almost to be making apology that he was my father—the notes were SO DIRTY! 'They're better than they look, lad!' he said."

"What ARE you thinking of, Alister?"

"Of nothing you are not thinking of, Ian, I hope in God! Mr.

Palmer's money is worse than it looks."

"You frightened me for a moment, Alister!"

"How could I, Ian?"

"It was but a nervo-mechanical fright. I knew well enough you could mean nothing I should not like. But I see trouble ahead, Alister!"

"We shall be called a pack of fools, but what of that! We shall be told the money itself was clean, however dirty the hands that made it! The money-grubs!"

"I would rather see you hanged, than pocketing a shilling of it!"

"Of course you would! But the man who could pocket it, will be relieved to find it is only his daughter I care about."

"There will be difficulty, Alister, I fear. How much have you said to Mercy?"

"I have SAID nothing definite."

"But she understands?"

"I think—I hope so.—Don't you think Christina is much improved, Ian?"

"She is more pleasant."

"She is quite attentive to you!"

"She is pleased with me for saving her life. She does not like me—and I have just arrived at not disliking her."

"There is a great change on her!"

"I doubt if there is any IN her though!"

"She may be only amusing herself with us in this outlandish place!

Mercy, I am sure, is quite different!"

"I would trust her with anything, Alister. That girl would die for the man she loved!"

"I would rather have her love, though we should never meet in this world, than the lands of my fathers!"

"What will you do then?"

"I will go to Mr. Palmer, and say to him: 'Give me your daughter. I am a poor man, but we shall have enough to live upon. I believe she will be happy.'"

"I will answer for him: 'I have the greatest regard for you, Macruadh. You are a gentleman, and that you are poor is not of the slightest consequence; Mercy's dowry shall be worthy the lady of a chief!'—What then, Alister?"

"Fathers that love money must be glad to get rid of their daughters without a dowry!"

"Yes, perhaps, when they are misers, or money is scarce, or wanted for something else. But when a poor man of position wanted to marry his daughter, a parent like Mr. Palmer would doubtless regard her dowry as a good investment. You must not think to escape that way, Alister! What would you answer him?"

"I would say, 'My dear sir,'—I may say 'My dear sir,' may I not? there is something about the man I like!—'I do not want your money. I will not have your money. Give me your daughter, and my soul will bless you.'"

"Suppose he should reply, 'Do you think I am going to send my daughter from my house like a beggar? No, no, my boy! she must carry something with her! If beggars married beggars, the world would be full of beggars!'—what would you say then?"

"I would tell him I had conscientious scruples about taking his money."

"He would tell you you were a fool, and not to be trusted with a wife. 'Who ever heard such rubbish!' he would say. 'Scruples, indeed! You must get over them! What are they?'—What would you say then?"

"If it came to that, I should have no choice but tell him I had insuperable objections to the way his fortune was made, and could not consent to share it."

"He would protest himself insulted, and swear, if his money was not good enough for you, neither was his daughter. What then?"

"I would appeal to Mercy."

"She is too young. It would be sad to set one of her years at variance with her family. I almost think I would rather you ran away with her. It is a terrible thing to go into a house and destroy the peace of those relations which are at the root of all that is good in the world."

"I know it! I know it! That is my trouble! I am not afraid of Mercy's courage, and I am sure she would hold out. I am certain nothing would make her marry the man she did not love. But to turn the house into a hell about her—I shrink from that!—Do you count it necessary to provide against every contingency before taking the first step?"

"Indeed I do not! The first step is enough. When that step has landed us, we start afresh. But of all things you must not lose your temper with the man. However despicable his money, you are his suitor for his daughter! And he may possibly not think you half good enough for her."

"That would be a grand way out of the difficulty!"

"How?"

"It would leave me far freer to deal with her."

"Perhaps. And in any case, the more we can honestly avoid reference to his money, the better. We are not called on to rebuke."

"Small is my inclination to allude to it—so long as not a stiver of it seeks to cross to the Macruadh!"

"That is fast as fate. But there is another thing, Alister: I fear lest you should ever forget that her birth and her connections are no more a part of the woman's self than her poverty or her wealth."

"I know it, Ian. I will not forget it."

"There must never be a word concerning them!"

"Nor a thought, Ian! In God's name I will be true to her."

They found Annie of the shop in a sad way. She had just had a letter from Lachlan, stating that he had not been well for some time, and that there was little prospect of his being able to fetch her. He prayed her therefore to go out to him; and had sent money to pay her passage and her mother's.

"When do you go?" asked the chief.

"My mother fears the voyage, and is very unwilling to turn her back on her own country. But oh, if Lachlan die, and me not with him!"

She could say no more.

"He shall not die for want of you!" said the laird. "I will talk to your mother."

He went into the room behind. Ian remained in the shop.

"Of course you must go, Annie!" he said.

"Indeed, sir, I must! But how to persuade my mother I do not know! And I cannot leave her even for Lachlan. No one would nurse him more tenderly than she; but she has a horror of the salt water, and what she most dreads is being buried in it. She imagines herself drowning to all eternity!"

"My brother will persuade her."

"I hope so, sir. I was just coming to him! I should never hold up my head again—in this world or the next—either if I did not go, or if I went without my mother! Aunt Conal told me, about a month since, that I was going a long journey, and would never come back. I asked her if I was to die on the way, but she would not answer me. Anyhow I'm not fit to be his wife, if I'm not ready to die for him! Some people think it wrong to marry anybody going to die, but at the longest, you know, sir, you must part sooner than you would! Not many are allowed to die together!—You don't think, do you, sir, that marriages go for nothing in the other world?"

She spoke with a white face and brave eyes, and Ian was glad at heart.

"I do not, Annie," he answered. "'The gifts of God are without repentance.' He did not give you and Lachlan to each other to part you again! Though you are not married yet, it is all the same so long as you are true to each other."

"Thank you, sir; you always make me feel strong!"

Alister came from the back room.

"I think your mother sees it not quite so difficult now," he said.

The next time they went, they found them preparing to go.

Now Ian had nearly finished the book he was writing about Russia, and could not begin another all at once. He must not stay at home doing nothing, and he thought that, as things were going from bad to worse in the highlands, he might make a voyage to Canada, visit those of his clan, and see what ought to be done for such as must soon follow them. He would presently have a little money in his possession, and believed he could not spend it better. He made up his mind therefore to accompany Annie and her mother, which resolve overcame the last of the old woman's lingering reluctance. He did not like leaving Alister at such a critical point in his history; but he said to himself that a man might be helped too much; and it might come that he and Mercy were in as much need of a refuge as the clan.

I cannot say NO worldly pride mingled in the chief's contempt for the distiller's money; his righteous soul was not yet clear of its inherited judgments as to what is dignified and what is not. He had in him still the prejudice of the landholder, for ages instinctive, against both manufacture and trade. Various things had combined to foster in him also the belief that trade at least was never free from more or less of unfair dealing, and was therefore in itself a low pursuit. He had not argued that nothing the Father of men has decreed can in its nature be contemptible, but must be capable of being nobly done. In the things that some one must do, the doer ranks in God's sight, and ought to rank among his fellow-men, according to how he does it. The higher the calling the more contemptible the man who therein pursues his own ends. The humblest calling, followed on the principles of the divine caller, is a true and divine calling, be it scavenging, handicraft, shop-keeping, or book-making. Oh for the day when God and not the king shall be regarded as the fountain of honour.

But the Macruadh looked upon the calling of the brewer or distiller as from the devil: he was not called of God to brew or distil! From childhood his mother had taught him a horror of gain by corruption. She had taught, and he had learned, that the poorest of all justifications, the least fit to serve the turn of gentleman, logician, or Christian, was—"If I do not touch this pitch, another

will; there will be just as much harm done; AND ANOTHER INSTEAD OF ME WILL HAVE THE BENEFIT; therefore it cannot defile me.—Offences must come, therefore I will do them!" "Imagine our Lord in the brewing trade instead of the carpentering!" she would say. That better beer was provided by the good brewer would not go far for brewer or drinker, she said: it mattered little that, by drinking good beer, the drunkard lived to be drunk the oftener. A brewer might do much to reduce drinking; but that would be to reduce a princely income to a modest livelihood, and to content himself with the baker's daughter instead of the duke's! It followed that the Macruadh would rather have robbed a church than touched Mr. Peregrine Palmer's money. To rifle the tombs of the dead would have seemed to him pure righteousness beside sharing in that. He could give Mercy up; he could NOT take such money with her! Much as he loved her, separate as he saw her, clearly as she was to him a woman undefiled and straight from God, it was yet a trial to him that she should be the daughter of a person whose manufacture and trade were such.

After much consideration, it was determined in the family conclave, that Ian should accompany the two women to Canada, note how things were going, and conclude what had best be done, should further exodus be found necessary. As, however, there had come better news of Lachlan, and it was plain he was in no immediate danger, they would not, for several reasons, start before the month of September. A few of the poorest of the clan resolved to go with them. Partly for their sakes, partly because his own provision would be small, Ian would take his passage also in the steerage.

CHAPTER IV

LOVE

Christina went back to London considerably changed. Her beauty was greater far, for there was a new element in it—a certain atmosphere of distances and shadows gave mystery to her landscape. Her weather, that is her mood, was now subject to changes which to many made her more attractive. Fits of wild gaiety alternated with glooms, through which would break flashes of feline playfulness, where pat and scratch were a little mixed. She had more admirers than ever, for she had developed points capable of interesting men of somewhat higher development than those she had hitherto pleased. At the same time she was more wayward and imperious with her courtiers. Gladly would she have thrown all the flattery once so coveted into the rag-bag of creation, to have one approving smile from the grave-looking, gracious man, whom she knew happier, wandering alone over the hills, than if she were walking by his side. For an hour she would persuade herself that he cared for her a little; the next she would comfort herself with the small likelihood of his meeting another lady in Glenruadh. But then he had been such a traveller, had seen so much of the great world, that perhaps he was already lost to her! It seemed but too probable, when she recalled the sadness with which he seemed sometimes overshadowed: it could not be a religious gloom, for when he spoke of God his face shone, and his words were strong! I think she mistook a certain gravity, like that of the Merchant of Venice, for sorrowfulness; though doubtless the peculiarity of his loss, as well as the loss itself, did sometimes make him sad.

She had tried on him her little arts of subjugation, but the moment she began to love him, she not only saw their uselessness, but hated them. Her repellent behaviour to her admirers, and her occasional excitement and oddity, caused her mother some anxiety, but as the season came to a close, she grew gayer, and was at times absolutely bewitching. The mother wished to go northward by degrees, paying visits on the way; but her plan met with no approbation from the girls. Christina longed for the presence and voice of Ian in the cottage-parlour, Mercy for a hill-side with the chief; both longed to hear them speak to each other in their own great way. And they talked so of the delights of their highland home, that the mother began to feel the mountains, the sea, and the islands, drawing her to a land of peace, where things went well, and the world knew how to live. But the stormiest months of her life were about to pass among those dumb mountains!

After a long and eager journey, the girls were once more in their rooms at the New House.

Mercy went to her window, and stood gazing from it upon the mountain-world, faint-lighted by the northern twilight. She might have said with Portia:—

"This night methinks is but the daylight sick;
It looks a little paler: 'tis a day,
Such as the day is when the sun is hid."

She could see the dark bulk of the hills, sharpened to a clear edge against the pellucid horizon, but with no colour, and no visible featuring of their great fronts. When the sun rose, it would reveal innumerable varieties of surface, by the mottling of endless shadows; now all was smooth as an unawakened conscience. By the shape of a small top that rose against the greenish sky betwixt the parting lines of two higher hills, where it seemed to peep out over the marge into the infinite, as a little man through the gap between the heads of taller neighbours, she knew the roof of THE TOMB; and she thought how, just below there, away as it seemed in the high-lifted solitudes of heaven, she had lain in the clutches of death, all the time watched and defended by the angel of a higher life who had been with her ever since first she came to Glenruadh, waking her out of such a stupidity, such a

non-existence, as now she could scarce see possible to human being. It was true her waking had been one with her love to that human East which first she saw as she opened her eyes, and whence first the light of her morning had flowed—the man who had been and was to her the window of God! But why should that make her doubt? God made man and woman to love each other: why should not the waking to love and the waking to truth come together, seeing both were of God? If the chief were never to speak to her again, she would never go back from what she had learned of him! If she ever became careless of truth and life and God, it would but show that she had never truly loved the chief!

As she stood gazing on the hill-top, high landmark of her history, she felt as if the earth were holding her up toward heaven, an offering to the higher life. The hill grew an altar of prayer on which her soul was lying, dead until taken up into life by the arms of the Father. A deep content pervaded her heart. She turned with her weight of peace, lay down, and went to sleep in the presence of her Life.

Christina looked also from her window, but her thoughts were not like Mercy's, for her heart was mainly filled, not with love of Ian, but with desire that Ian should love her. She longed to be his queen—the woman of all women he had seen. The sweet repose of the sleeping world wrought in her—not peace, but weakness. Her soul kept leaning towards Ian; she longed for his arms to start out the alien nature lying so self-satisfied all about her. To her the presence of God took shape as an emptiness—an absence. The resting world appeared to her cold, unsympathetic, heedless; its peace was but heartlessness. The soft pellucid chrysolite of passive heavenly thought, was a merest arrangement, a common fact, meaning nothing to her.

She was hungry, not merely after bliss, but after distinction in bliss; not after growth, but after acknowledged superiority. She needed to learn that she was nobody—that if the world were peopled with creatures like her, it would be no more worth sustaining than were it a world of sand, of which no man could build even a hut. Still, by her need of another, God was laying hold of her. As by the law is the knowledge of sin, so by love is selfishness rampantly roused—to be at last, like death, swallowed up in victory—the victory of the ideal self that dwells in God.

All night she dreamed sad dreams of Ian in the embrace of a lovely woman, without word or look for her. She woke weeping, and said to herself that it could not be. He COULD not be taken from her! it was against nature! Soul, brain, and heart, claimed him hers! How could another possess what, in the testimony of her whole consciousness, was hers and hers alone! Love asserts an innate and irreversible right of profoundest property in the person loved. It is an instinct—but how wrongly, undivinely, falsely interpreted! Hence so many tears! Hence a law of nature, deep written in the young heart, seems often set utterly at nought by circumstance!

But the girl in her dejection and doubt, was worth far more than in her content and confidence. She was even now the richer by the knowledge of sorrow, and she was on the way to know that she needed help, on the way to hate herself, to become capable of loving. Life could never be the same to her, and the farther from the same the better!

The beauty came down in the morning pale and dim and white-lipped, like a flower that had had no water. Mercy was fresh and rosy, with a luminous mist of loveliness over her plain unfinished features. Already had they begun to change in the direction of beauty. Christina's eyes burned; in Mercy's shone something of the light by which a soul may walk and not stumble. In the eyes of both was expectation, in the eyes of the one confident, in the eyes of the other anxious.

As soon as they found themselves alone together, eyes sought eyes, and met in understanding. They had not made confidantes of each other, each guessed well, and was well guessed at. They did not speculate; they understood. In like manner, Mercy and Alister understood each other, but not Christina and Ian. Neither of these knew the feelings of the other.

Without a word they rose, put on their hats, left the house, and took the road toward the valley.

About half-way to the root of the ridge, they came in sight of the ruined castle; Mercy stopped with a little cry.

"Look! Chrissy!" she said, pointing.

On the corner next them, close by the pepper-pot turret, sat the two men, in what seemed to loving eyes a dangerous position, but to the mountaineers themselves a comfortable coin of vantage. The girls thought, "They are looking out for us!" but Ian was there only because Alister was there.

The men waved their bonnets. Christina responded with her handkerchief. The men disappeared from their perch, and were with the ladies before they reached the ridge. There was no embarrassment on either side, though a few cheeks were rosier than usual. To the chief, Mercy was far beyond his memory of her. Not her face only, but her every movement bore witness to a deeper pleasure, a greater freedom in life than before.

"Why were you in such a dangerous place?" asked Christina.

"We were looking out for you," answered Alister. "From there we could see you the moment you came out."

"Why didn't you come and meet us then?"

"Because we wanted to watch you coming."

"Spies!—I hope, Mercy, we were behaving ourselves properly! I had no idea we were watched!"

"We thought you had quarrelled; neither said a word to the other."

Mercy looked up; Christina looked down.

"Could you hear us at that height?" asked Mercy.

"How could we when there was not a word to hear!"

"How did you know we were silent?"

"We might have known by the way you walked," replied Alister. "But if you had spoken we should have heard, for sound travels far among the mountains!"

"Then I think it was a shame!" said Christina. "How could you tell that we might not object to your hearing us?"

"We never thought of that!" said Alister. "I am very sorry. We shall certainly not be guilty again!"

"What men you are for taking everything in downright earnest!" cried Christina; "—as if we could have anything to say we should wish YOU not to hear?"

She pat a little emphasis on the YOU, but not much. Alister heard it as if Mercy had said it, and smiled a pleased smile.

"It will be a glad day for the world," he said, "when secrecy is over, and every man may speak out the thing that is in him, without danger of offence!"

In her turn, Christina heard the words as if spoken with reference to Ian though not by him, and took them to hint at the difficulty of saying what was in his heart. She had such an idea of her superiority because of her father's wealth and fancied position, that she at once concluded Ian dreaded rejection with scorn, for it was not even as if he were the chief. However poor, Alister was at least the head of a family, and might set SIR before, and BARONET after his name—not that her father would think that much of a dignity!—but no younger son of whatever rank, would be good enough for her in her father's eyes! At the same time she had a choice as well as her father, and he should find she too had a will of her own!

"But was it not a dangerous place to be in?" she said.

"It is a little crumbly!" confessed Ian. "—That reminds me, Alister, we must have a bout at the old walls before long!—Ever since Alister was ten years old," he went on in explanation to Christina, "he and I have been patching and pointing at the old hulk—the stranded ship of our poor fortunes. I showed you, did I not, the ship in our coat of arms—the galley at least, in which, they say, we arrived at the island?"

"Yes, I remember.—But you don't mean you do mason's work as well as everything else?" exclaimed Christina.

"Come; we will show you," said the chief.

"What do you do it for?"

The brothers exchanged glances.

"Would you count it sufficient reason," returned Ian, "that we desired to preserve its testimony to the former status of our family?"

A pang of pleasure shot through the heart of Christina. Passion is potent to twist in its favour whatever can possibly be so twisted. Here was an indubitable indication of his thoughts! He must make the most of himself, set what he could against the overwhelming advantages on her side! In the eyes of a man of the world like her father, an old name was nothing beside new money! still an old castle was always an old castle! and that he cared about it for her sake made it to her at least worth something!

Ere she could give an answer, Ian went on.

"But in truth," he said, "we have always had a vague hope of its resurrection. The dream of our boyhood was to rebuild the castle. Every year it has grown more hopeless, and keeps receding. But we have come to see how little it matters, and content ourselves with keeping up, for old love's sake, what is left of the ruin."

"How do you get up on the walls?" asked Mercy.

"Ah, that is a secret!" said Ian.

"Do tell us," pleaded Christina.

"If you want very much to know,—" answered Ian, a little doubtfully.

"I do, I do!"

"Then I suppose we must tell you!"

Yet more confirmation to the passion-prejudiced ears of Christina!

"There is a stair," Ian went on, "of which no one but our two selves knows anything. Such stairs are common in old houses—far commoner than people in towns have a notion of. But there would not have been much of it left by this time, if we hadn't taken care of it. We were little fellows when we began, and it needed much contrivance, for we were not able to unseat the remnants of the broken steps, and replace them with new ones."

"Do show it us," begged Christina.

"We will keep it," said Alister, "for some warm twilight. Morning is not for ruins. Yon mountain-side is calling to us. Will you come, Mercy?"

"Oh yes!" cried Christina; "that will be much better! Come, Mercy!"

You are up to a climb, I am sure!"

"I ought to be, after such a long rest."

"You may have forgotten how to climb!" said Alister.

"I dreamed too much of the hills for that! And always the noise of London was changed into the rush of waters."

They had dropped a little behind the other pair.

"Did you always climb your dream-hills alone?" asked Alister.

She answered him with just a lift of her big dark eyes.

They walked slowly down the road till they came to Mrs. Conal's path, passed her door unassailed, and went up the hill.

CHAPTER V

PASSION AND PATIENCE

It was a glorious morning, and as they climbed, the lightening air made their spirits rise with their steps. Great masses of cloud hung beyond the edge of the world, and here and there towered foundationless in the sky—huge tumultuous heaps of white vapour with gray shadows. The sun was strong, and poured down floods of light, but his heat was deliciously tempered by the mountain atmosphere. There was no wind—only an occasional movement as if the air itself were breathing—just enough to let them feel they moved in no vacuum, but in the heart of a gentle ocean.

They came to the hut I have already described as the one chiefly inhabited by Hector of the Stags and Bob of the Angels. It commanded a rare vision. In every direction rose some cone-shaped hill. The world lay in coloured waves before them, wild, rugged, and grand, with sheltering spots of beauty between, and the shine of lowly waters. They tapped at the door of the hut, but there was no response; they lifted the latch—it had no lock—and found neither within. Alister and Mercy wandered a little higher, to the shadow of a great stone; Christina went inside the hut and looked from its door upon the world; Ian leaned against the side of it, and looked up to the sky. Suddenly a few great drops fell—it was hard to say whence. The scattered clouds had been drawing a little nearer the sun, growing whiter as they approached him, and more had ascended from the horizon into the middle air, blue sky abounding between them. A swift rain, like a rain of the early summer, began to fall, and grew to a heavy shower. They were glorious drops that made that shower; for the sun shone, and every drop was a falling gem, shining, sparkling like a diamond, as it fell. It was a bounteous rain, coming from near the zenith, and falling in straight lines direct from heaven to earth. It wanted but sound to complete its charm, and that the bells of the heather gave, set ringing by the drops. The heaven was filled with blue windows, and the rain seemed to come from them rather than from the clouds. Into the rain rose the heads of the mountains, each clothed in its surplice of thin mist; they seemed rising on tiptoe heavenward, eager to drink of the high-born comfort; for the rain comes down, not upon the mown grass only, but upon the solitary and desert places also, where grass will never be—"the playgrounds of the young angels," Bob called them.

"Do come in," said Christina; "you will get quite wet!"

He turned towards her. She stepped back, and he entered. Like one a little weary, he sat down on Hector's old chair.

"Is anything the matter?" asked Christina, with genuine concern.

She saw that he was not quite like himself, that there was an unusual expression on his face. He gave a faint apologetic smile.

"As I stood there," he answered, "a strange feeling came over me—a foreboding, I suppose you would call it!"

He paused; Christina grew pale, and said, "Won't you tell me what it was?"

"It was an odd kind of conviction that the next time I stood there, it would not be in the body.—I think I shall not come back."

"Come back!" echoed Christina, fear beginning to sip at the cup of her heart. "Where are you going?"

"I start for Canada next week."

She turned deadly white, and put out her hands, feeling blindly after support. Ian started to his feet.

"We have tired you out!" he said in alarm, and took her by both hands to place her in the chair.

She did not hear him. The world had grown dark about her, a hissing noise was in her ears, and she would have fallen had he not put his arm round her. The moment she felt supported, she

began to come to herself. There was no pretence, however, no coquetry in her faintness. Neither was it aught but misery and affection that made her lay her head on Ian's shoulder, and burst into a violent fit of weeping. Unused to real emotion, familiar only with the poverty-stricken, false emotion of conquest and gratified vanity, when the real emotion came she did not know how to deal with it, and it overpowered her.

"Oh! oh!" she cried at length between her sobs, "I am ashamed of myself! I can't help it! I can't help it! What will you think of me! I have disgraced myself!"

Ian had been far from any suspicion of the state of things, but he had had too much sorrowful experience to be able to keep his unwilling eyes closed to this new consternation. The cold shower seemed to flood his soul; the bright drops descending with such swiftness of beauty, instinct with sun-life, turned into points of icy steel that pierced his heart. But he must not heed himself! he must speak to her! He must say something through the terrible shroud that infolded them!

"You are as safe with me," he faltered, "—as safe as with your mother!"

"I believe it! I know it," she answered, still sobbing, but looking up with an expression of genuine integrity such as he had never seen on her face before. "But I AM sorry!" she went on. "It is very weak, and very, very un—un—womanly of me! But it came upon me all at once! If I had only had some warning! Oh, why did you not tell me before? Why did you not prepare me for it? You might have known what it would be to hear it so suddenly!"

More and more aghast grew Ian! What was to be done? What was to be said? What was left for a man to do, when a woman laid her soul before him? Was there nothing but a lie to save her from bitterest humiliation? To refuse any woman was to Ian a hard task; once he had found it impossible to refuse even where he could not give, and had let a woman take his soul! Thank God, she took it indeed! he yielded himself perfectly, and God gave him her in return! But that was once, and for ever! It could not be done again!

"I am very sorry!" he murmured; and the words and their tone sent a shiver through the heart of Christina.

But now that she had betrayed her secret, the pent up tide of her phantasy rushed to the door. She was reckless. Used to everything her own way, knowing nothing of disappointment, a new and ill understood passion dominating her, she let everything go and the torrent sweep her with it. Passion, like a lovely wild beast, had mastered her, and she never thought of trying to tame it. It was herself! there was not enough of her outside the passion to stand up against it! She began to see the filmy eyed Despair, and had neither experience to deal with herself, nor reticence enough to keep silence.

"If you speak to me like that," she cried, "my heart will break!—Must you go away?"

"Dear Miss Palmer,—" faltered Ian.

"Oh!" she ejaculated, with a world of bitterness in the protest.

"—do let us be calm!" continued Ian. "We shall not come to anything if we lose ourselves this way!"

The WE and the US gave her a little hope.

"How can I be calm!" she cried. "I am not cold-hearted like you!—You are going away, and I shall never see you again to all eternity!"

She burst out weeping afresh.

"Do love me a little before you go," she sobbed. "You gave me my life once, but that does not make it right to take it from me again! It only gives you a right to its best!"

"God knows," said Ian, "if my life could serve you, I should count it a small thing to yield!—But this is idle talk! A man must not pretend anything! We must not be untrue!"

She fancied he did not believe in her.

"I know! I know! you may well distrust me!" she returned. "I have often behaved abominably to you! But indeed I am true now! I dare not tell you a lie. To you I MUST speak the truth, for I love you with my whole soul."

Ian stood dumb. His look of consternation and sadness brought her to herself a little.

"What have I done!" she cried, and drawing back a pace, stood looking at him, and trembling. "I am disgraced for ever! I have told a man I love him, and he leaves me to the shame of it! He will not save me from it! he will not say one word to take it away! Where is your generosity, Ian?"

"I must be true!" said Ian, speaking as if to himself, and in a voice altogether unlike his own.

"You will not love me! You hate me! You despise me! But I will not live rejected! He brushes me like a feather from his coat!"

"Hear me," said Ian, trying to recover himself. "Do not think me insensible—"

"Oh, yes! I know!" cried Christina yet more bitterly; "—INSENSIBLE TO THE HONOUR I DO YOU, and all that world of nothing!—Pray use your victory! Lord it over me! I am the weed under your foot! I beg you will not spare me! Speak out what you think of me!"

Ian took her hand. It trembled as if she would pull it away, and her eyes flashed an angry fire. She looked more nearly beautiful than ever he had seen her! His heart was like to break. He drew her to the chair, and taking a stool, sat down beside her. Then, with a voice that gathered strength as he proceeded, he said:—

"Let me speak to you, Christina Palmer, as in the presence of him who made us! To pretend I loved you would be easier than to bear the pain of giving you such pain. Were I selfish enough, I could take much delight in your love; but I scorn the unmanliness of accepting gold and returning silver: my love is not mine to give."

It was some relief to her proud heart to imagine he would have loved her had he been free. But she did not speak.

"If I thought," pursued Ian, "that I had, by any behaviour of mine, been to blame for this,—"
There he stopped, lest he should seem to lay blame on her.—"I think," he resumed, "I could help you if you would listen to me. Were I in like trouble with you, I would go into my room, and shut the door, and tell my Father in heaven everything about it. Ah, Christina! if you knew him, you would not break your heart that a man did not love you just as you loved him."

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