# GEORGE MACDONALD

# MALCOLM

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**MacDonald G.**

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# Содержание

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## CHAPTER I: MISS HORN

"Na, na; I hae nae feelin's, thankfu' to say. I never kent ony guid come o' them. They're a terrible sicht i' the gait."

"Naebody ever thoucht o' layin' 't to yer chairge, mem."

"'Deed, I aye had eneuch adu to du the thing I had to du, no to say the thing 'at naebody wad du but mysel'. I hae had nae leisur' for feelin's an' that," insisted Miss Horn.

But here a heavy step descending the stair just outside the room attracted her attention, and checking the flow of her speech perforce, with three ungainly strides she reached the landing.

"Watty Witherspail! Watty!" she called after the footsteps down the stair.

"Yes, mem," answered a gruff voice from below.

"Watty, whan ye fess the bit boxie, jist pit a hemmer an' a puckle nails i' your pooch to men' the hen hoose door. The tane maun be atten't till as weel's the tither."

"The bit boxie" was the coffin of her third cousin Griselda Campbell, whose body lay on the room on her left hand as she called down the stair. Into that on her right Miss Horn now re-entered, to rejoin Mrs Mellis, the wife of the principal draper in the town, who had called ostensibly to condole with her, but really to see the corpse.

"Aih! she was taen yoong!" sighed the visitor, with long drawn tones and a shake of the head, implying that therein lay ground of complaint, at which poor mortals dared but hint.

"No that yoong," returned Miss Horn. "She was upo' the edge o' aucht an' thirty."

"Weel, she had a sair time o' 't."

"No that sair, sae far as I see—an' wha sud ken better? She's had a bien doon sittin' (sheltered quarters), and sud hae had as lang's I was to the fore. Na, na; it was nowther sae young nor yet sae sair."

"Aih! but she was a patient cratur wi' a' flesh," persisted Mrs Mellis, as if she would not willingly be foiled in the attempt to extort for the dead some syllable of acknowledgment from the lips of her late companion.

"'Deed she was that!—a wheen ower patient wi' some. But that cam' o' haein mair hert nor brains. She had feelin's gien ye like—and to spare. But I never took ower ony o' the stock. It's a pity she hadna the jeedgment to match, for she never misdoobted onybody eneuch. But I wat it disna maitter noo, for she's gane whaur it 's less wantit. For ane 'at has the hairmlessness o' the doo 'n this ill wulled warl', there's a feck o' ten 'at has the wisdom o' the serpent. An' the serpents mak sair wark wi' the doos—lat alane them 'at flees into the verra mouws o' them."

"Weel, ye're jist richt there," said Mrs Mellis. "An' as ye say, she was aye some easy to perswaud. I hae nae doubt she believed to the ver' last he wad come back and mairry her."

"Come back and mairry her! Wha or what div ye mean? I jist tell ye Mistress Mellis—an' it 's weel ye're named—gien ye daur to hint at ae word o' sic clavers, it 's this side o' this door o' mine ye s' be less acquant wi'."

As she spoke, the hawk eyes of Miss Horn glowed on each side of her hawk nose, which grew more and more hooked as she glared, while her neck went craning forward as if she were on the point of making a swoop on the offender. Mrs Mellis's voice trembled with something like fear as she replied:

"Gude guide 's, Miss Horn! What hae I said to gar ye look at me sae by ordinar 's that?"

"Said!" repeated Miss Horn, in a tone that revealed both annoyance with herself and contempt for her visitor. "There's no a claver in a' the countryside but ye maun fess 't hame aneth yer oxter, as

gin 't were the prodigal afore he repentit. Ye s' get sma thanks for sic like here. An' her lyin' there as she'll lie till the jeedgment day, puir thing!"

" sure I meant no offence, Miss Horn," said her visitor. "I thocht a' body kent 'at she was ill about him."

"Aboot wha, i' the name o' the father o' lees?"

"Ow, aboot that lang leggit doctor 'at set oat for the Ingies, an' dee'd afore he wan across the equautor. Only fouk said he was nae mair deid nor a halvert worm, an' wad be hame whan she was merried."

"It's a' lees frae heid to fit, an' frae bert to skin."

"Weel, it was plain to see she dwyned awa efter he gaed, an' never was hersel' again—ye dinna deny that?"

"It's a' havers," persisted Miss Horn, but in accents considerably softened. "She cared na mair aboot the chield nor I did mysel'. She dwyned, I grant ye, an' he gaed awa, I grant ye; but the win' blaws an' the water rins, an the tane has little to du wi' the tither."

"Weel, weel; sorry I said onything to offen' ye, an' I canna say mair. Wi' yer leave, Miss Horn, I'll jist gang an' tak' a last leuk at her, puir thing!"

"'Deed, ye s' du naething o' the kin'! I s' lat nobody glower at her 'at wad gang an spairge sic havers about her, Mistress Mellis. To say 'at sic a doo as my Grizel, puir, saft hertit, winsome thing, wad hae lookit twice at ony sic a serpent as him! Na, na, mem! Gang yer wa's hame, an' come back straucht frae yer prayers the morn's mornin'. By that time she'll be quaiet in her coffin, an' I'll be quaiet i' my temper. Syne I'll lat ye see her—maybe.—I wiss I was weel rid o' the sicht o' her, for I canna bide it. Lord, I canna bide it."

These last words were uttered in a murmured aside, inaudible to Mrs Mellis, to whom, however, they did not apply, but to the dead body. She rose notwithstanding in considerable displeasure, and with a formal farewell walked from the room, casting a curious glance as she left it in the direction of that where the body lay, and descended the stairs as slowly as if on every step she deliberated whether the next would bear her weight. Miss Horn, who had followed her to the head of the stair, watched her out of sight below the landing, when she turned and walked back once more into the parlour, but with a lingering look towards the opposite room, as if she saw through the closed door what lay white on the white bed.

"It's a God's mercy I hae no feelin's," she said to herself. "To even (equal) my bonny Grizel to sic a lang kyte clung chiel as yon! Aih, puir Grizel! She's gane frae me like a knotless threid."

# CHAPTER II: BARBARA CATANACH

Miss Horn was interrupted by the sound of the latch of the street door, and sprung from her chair in anger.

"Canna they lat her sleep for five meenutes?" she cried aloud, forgetting that there was no fear of rousing her any more.—"It'll be Jean come in frae the pump," she reflected, after a moment's pause; but, hearing no footstep along the passage to the kitchen, concluded—"It's no her, for she gangs aboot the hoose like the fore half o' a new shod cowt;" and went down the stair to see who might have thus presumed to enter unbidden.

In the kitchen, the floor of which was as white as scrubbing could make it, and sprinkled with sea sand—under the gaily painted Dutch clock, which went on ticking as loud as ever, though just below the dead—sat a woman about sixty years of age, whose plump face to the first glance looked kindly, to the second, cunning, and to the third, evil. To the last look the plumpness appeared unhealthy, suggesting a doughy indentation to the finger, and its colour also was pasty. Her deep set, black bright eyes, glowing from under the darkest of eyebrows, which met over her nose, had something of a fascinating influence—so much of it that at a first interview one was not likely for a time to notice any other of her features. She rose as Miss Horn entered, buried a fat fist in a soft side, and stood silent.

"Weel?" said Miss Horn interrogatively, and was silent also.

"I thocht ye micht want a cast o' my callin'," said the woman.

"Na, na; there's no a han' 'at s' lay finger upo' the bairn but mine ain," said Miss Horn. "I had it a' ower, my lee lane, afore the skreigh o' day. She's lyin' quaiet noo—verra quaiet—waitin' upo' Watty Witherspail. Whan he fesses hame her bit boxie, we s' hae her laid canny intill 't, an' hae dune wi' 't."

"Weel, mem, for a leddy born, like yersel', I maun say, ye tak it unco composed!"

" no awaur, Mistress Catanach, o' ony necessity laid upo' ye to say yer min' i' this hoose. It's no expeckit. But what for sud I no tak' it wi' composur'? We'll hae to tak' oor ain turn er lang, as composed as we hae the skiel o', and gang oot like a lang nibbit can'le—ay, an lea' jist sic a memory ahin' some o' 's, Bawby."

"I kenna gien ye mean me, Miss Horn," said the woman; "but it 's no that muckle o' a memory I expec' to lea' ahin' me."

"The less the better," muttered Miss Horn; but her unwelcome visitor went on:

"Them 'at 's maist i' my debt kens least aboot it; and then mithers canna be said to hae muckle to be thankfu' for. It's God's trowth, I ken waur nor ever I did mem. A body in my trade canna help fa'in' amo' ill company whiles, for we're a' born in sin, an' brocht furth in ineequity, as the Buik says; in fac', it 's a' sin thegither: we come o' sin an' we gang for sin; but ye ken the likes o' me maunna clype (tell tales). A' the same, gien ye dinna tak the help o' my han', ye winna refuse me the sicht o' my een, puir thing!"

"There's nane sall luik upon her deid 'at wasna a pleesur' till her livin'; an' ye ken weel eneuch, Bawby, she cudna thole (bear) the sicht o' you."

"An' guid rizzon had she for that, gien a' 'at gangs throu' my heid er I fa' asleep i' the lang mirk nichts be a hair better nor ane o' the auld wives' fables 'at fowk says the holy buik maks sae licht o'."

"What mean ye?" demanded Miss Horn, sternly and curtly.

"I ken what I mean mysel', an' ane that's no content wi' that, bude (behaved) ill be a howdie (midwife). I wad fain hae gotten a fancy oot o' my heid that's been there this mony a lang day; but please yersel', mem, gien ye winna be neebourly."

"Ye s' no gang near her—no to save ye frae a' the ill dreams that ever gethered aboot a sin stappit (stuffed) bowster!" cried Miss Horn, and drew down her long upper lip in a strong arch.

"Ca cannie! ca cannie! (drive gently)," said Bawby. "Dinna anger me ower sair, for I am but mortal. Fowk tak a heap frae you, Miss Horn, 'at they'll tak frae nane ither, for your temper's weel kent, an' little made o'; but it 's an ill faured thing to anger the howdie—sae muckle lies upo' her; an' no i' the tune to put up wi' muckle the nicht. I wonner at ye bein' sae oonneebourlike—at sic a time tu, wi' a corp i' the hoose!"

"Gang awa—gang oot o't: it 's my hoose," said Miss Horn, in a low, hoarse voice, restrained from rising to tempest pitch only by the consciousness of what lay on the other side of the ceiling above her head. "I wad as sune lat a cat intill the deid chaumer to gang loupin' ower the corp, or may be waur, as I wad lat yersel' intill 't Bawby Catanach; an' there's till ye!"

At this moment the opportune entrance of Jean afforded fitting occasion to her mistress for leaving the room without encountering the dilemma of either turning the woman out—a proceeding which the latter, from the way in which she set her short, stout figure square on the floor, appeared ready to resist—or of herself abandoning the field in discomfiture: she turned and marched from the kitchen with her head in the air, and the gait of one who had been insulted on her own premises.

She was sitting in the parlour, still red faced and wrathful, when Jean entered, and, closing the door behind her, drew near to her mistress, bearing a narrative, commenced at the door, of all she had seen, heard, and done, while "oot an' aboot i' the toon." But Miss Horn interrupted her the moment she began to speak.

"Is that wuman furth the hoose, Jean?" she asked, in the tone of one who waited her answer in the affirmative as a preliminary condition of all further conversation.

"She's gane, mem," answered Jean—adding to herself in a wordless thought, " no sayin' whaur."

"She's a wuman I wadna hae ye throng wi', Jean."

"I ken no ill o' her, mem," returned Jean.

"She's eneuch to corrup' a kirkyaird!" said her mistress, with more force than fitness.

Jean, however, was on the shady side of fifty, more likely to have already yielded than to be liable to a first assault of corruption; and little did Miss Horn think how useless was her warning, or where Barbara Catanach was at that very moment. Trusting to Jean's cunning, as well she might; she was in the dead chamber, and standing over the dead. She had folded back the sheet—not from the face, but from the feet—and raised the night dress of fine linen in which the love of her cousin had robed the dead for the repose of the tomb.

"It wad hae been tellin' her," she muttered, "to hae spoken Bawby fair! no used to be fa'en foul o' that gait. I s' be even wi' her yet, thinkin'—the auld speldin'! Losh! and Praise be thankit! there it 's! It's there!—a wee darker, but the same—jist whaur I could ha' laid the pint o' my finger upo' 't i' the mirk!—Noo lat the worms eat it," she concluded, as she folded down the linen of shroud and sheet—"an' no mortal ken o' 't but mysel' an' him 'at bude till hae seen 't, gien he was a hair better nor Glenkindie's man i' the auld ballant!"

The instant she had rearranged the garments of the dead, she turned and made for the door with a softness of step that strangely contrasted with the ponderousness of her figure, and indicated great muscular strength, opened it with noiseless circumspection to the width of an inch, peeped out from the crack, and seeing the opposite door still shut, stepped out with a swift, noiseless swing of person and door simultaneously, closed the door behind her, stole down the stairs, and left the house. Not a board creaked, not a latch clicked as she went. She stepped into the street as sedately as if she had come from paying to the dead the last offices of her composite calling, the projected front of her person appearing itself aware of its dignity as the visible sign and symbol of a good conscience and kindly heart.

# CHAPTER III: THE MAD LAIRD

When Mistress Catanach arrived at the opening of a street which was just opposite her own door, and led steep toward the sea town, she stood, and shading her eyes with her hooded hand, although the sun was far behind her, looked out to sea. It was the forenoon of a day of early summer. The larks were many and loud in the skies above her—for, although she stood in a street, she was only a few yards from the green fields—but she could hardly have heard them, for their music was not for her. To the northward, whither her gaze—if gaze it could be called—was directed, all but cloudless blue heavens stretched over an all but shadowless blue sea; two bold, jagged promontories, one on each side of her, formed a wide bay; between that on the west and the sea town at her feet, lay a great curve of yellow sand, upon which the long breakers, born of last night's wind, were still roaring from the northeast, although the gale had now sunk to a breeze—cold and of doubtful influence. From the chimneys of the fishermen's houses below, ascended a yellowish smoke, which, against the blue of the sea, assumed a dull green colour as it drifted vanishing towards the southwest. But Mrs Catanach was looking neither at nor for anything: she had no fisherman husband, or any other relative at sea; she was but revolving something in her unwholesome mind, and this was her mode of concealing an operation which naturally would have been performed with down bent head and eyes on the ground.

While she thus stood a strange figure drew near, approaching her with step almost as noiseless as that with which she had herself made her escape from Miss Horn's house. At a few yards' distance from her it stood, and gazed up at her countenance as intently as she seemed to be gazing on the sea. It was a man of dwarfish height and uncertain age, with a huge hump upon his back, features of great refinement, a long thin beard, and a forehead unnaturally large, over eyes which, although of a pale blue, mingled with a certain mottled milky gleam, had a pathetic, dog-like expression. Decently dressed in black, he stood with his hands in the pockets of his trowsers, gazing immovably in Mrs Catanach's face.

Becoming suddenly aware of his presence, she glanced downward, gave a great start and a half scream, and exclaimed in no gentle tones:

"Preserve 's! Whaur come ye frae?"

It was neither that she did not know the man, nor that she meant any offence: her words were the mere embodiment of the annoyance of startled surprise; but their effect was peculiar.

Without a single other motion he turned abruptly on one heel, gazed seaward with quick flushed cheeks and glowing eyes, but, apparently too polite to refuse an answer to the evidently unpleasant question, replied in low, almost sullen tones:

"I dinna ken whaur I come frae. Ye ken 'at I dinna ken whaur I come frae. I dinna ken whaur ye come frae. I dinna ken whaur onybody comes frae."

"Hoot, laird! nae offence!" returned Mrs Catanach. "It was yer ain wyte (blame). What gart ye stan' glowerin' at a body that gait, ohn telled (without telling) them 'at ye was there?"

"I thocht ye was luikin' whaur ye cam frae," returned the man in tones apologetic and hesitating.

"'Deed I fash wi' nae sic freits," said Mrs Catanach.

"Sae lang's ye ken whaur ye're gaein' till," suggested the man

"Toots! I fash as little wi' that either, and ken jist as muckle about the tane as the tither," she answered with a low oily guttural laugh of contemptuous pity.

"I ken mair nor that mysel', but no muckle," said the man. "I dinna ken whaur I cam frae, and I dinna ken whaur gaun till; but I ken 'at gaun whaur I cam frae. That stan's to rizzon, ye see; but they telled me 'at ye kenned a' about whaur we a' cam frae."

"Deil a bit o' 't!" persisted Mrs Catanach, in tones of repudiation. "What care I whaur I cam frae, sae lang's—"

"Sae lang's what, gien ye please?" pleaded the man, with a childlike entreaty in his voice.

"Weel—gien ye wull hae't—sae lang's I cam frae my mither," said the woman, looking down on the inquirer with a vulgar laugh.

The hunchback uttered a shriek of dismay, and turned and fled; and as he turned, long, thin, white hands flashed out of his pockets, pressed against his ears, and intertwined their fingers at the back of his neck. With a marvellous swiftness he shot down the steep descent towards the shore.

"The deil's in't 'at I bude to anger him!" said the woman, and walked away, with a short laugh of small satisfaction.

The style she had given the hunchback was no nickname. Stephen Stewart was laird of the small property and ancient house of Kirkbyres, of which his mother managed the affairs—hardly for her son, seeing that, beyond his clothes, and five pounds a year of pocket money, he derived no personal advantage from his possessions. He never went near his own house, for, from some unknown reason, plentifully aimed at in the dark by the neighbours, he had such a dislike to his mother that he could not bear to hear the name of mother, or even the slightest allusion to the relationship.

Some said he was a fool; others a madman; some both; none, however, said he was a rogue; and all would have been willing to allow that whatever it might be that caused the difference between him and other men, throughout the disturbing element blew ever and anon the air of a sweet humanity.

Along the shore, in the direction of the great rocky promontory that closed in the bay on the west, with his hands still clasped over his ears, as if the awful word were following him, he flew rather than fled. It was nearly low water, and the wet sand afforded an easy road to his flying feet. Betwixt sea and shore, a sail in the offing the sole other moving thing in the solitary landscape, like a hunted creature he sped, his footsteps melting and vanishing behind him in the half quicksand.

Where the curve of the water line turned northward at the root of the promontory, six or eight fishing boats were drawn up on the beach in various stages of existence. One was little more than half built, the fresh wood shining against the background of dark rock. Another was newly tarred; its sides glistened with the rich shadowy brown, and filled the air with a comfortable odour. Another wore age long neglect on every plank and seam; half its props had sunk or decayed, and the huge hollow leaned low on one side, disclosing the squalid desolation of its lean ribbed and naked interior, producing all the phantasmic effect of a great swampy desert; old pools of water overgrown with a green scum, lay in the hollows between its rotting timbers, and the upper planks were baking and cracking in the sun. Near where they lay a steep path ascended the cliff, whence through grass and ploughed land, it led across the promontory to the fishing village of Scaurnose, which lay on the other side of it. There the mad laird, or Mad Humpy, as he was called by the baser sort, often received shelter, chiefly from the family of a certain Joseph Mair, one of the most respectable inhabitants of the place.

But the way he now pursued lay close under the cliffs of the headland, and was rocky and difficult. He passed the boats, going between them and the cliffs, at a footpace, with his eyes on the ground, and not even a glance at the two men who were at work on the unfinished boat. One of them was his friend, Joseph Mair. They ceased their work for a moment to look after him.

"That's the puir laird again," said Joseph, the instant he was beyond hearing. "Something's wrang wi' him. I wonder what's come ower him!"

"I haena seen him for a while noo," returned the other. "They tell me 'at his mither made him ower to the deil afore he cam to the light; and sae, aye as his birthday comes roun', Sawtan gets the pooer ower him. Eh, but he's a fearsome sicht whan he's ta'en that gait!" continued the speaker. "I met him ance i' the gloamin', jist ower by the toon, wi' his een glowerin' like uily lamps, an' the slaver rinnin' doon his lang baird. I jist laup as gien I had seen the muckle Sawtan himsel'."

"Ye nott na (needed not) hae dune that," was the reply. "He's jist as hairmless, e'en at the warst, as ony lamb. He's but a puir cratur wha's tribble's ower strang for him—that's a'. Sawtan has as little to du wi' him as wi' ony man I ken."

# CHAPTER IV: PHEMY MAIR

With eyes that stared as if they and not her ears were the organs of hearing, this talk was heard by a child of about ten years of age, who sat in the bottom of the ruined boat, like a pearl in a decaying oyster shell, one hand arrested in the act of dabbling in a green pool, the other on its way to her lips with a mouthful of the seaweed called dulse. She was the daughter of Joseph Mair just mentioned—a fisherman who had been to sea in a man of war (in consequence of which his to-name or nickname was Blue Peter), where having been found capable, he was employed as carpenter's mate, and came to be very handy with his tools: having saved a little money by serving in another man's boat, he was now building one for himself.

He was a dark complexioned, foreign looking man, with gold rings in his ears, which he said enabled him to look through the wind "ohn his een watered." Unlike most of his fellows, he was a sober and indeed thoughtful man, ready to listen to the voice of reason from any quarter; they were, in general, men of hardihood and courage, encountering as a mere matter of course such perilous weather as the fishers on a great part of our coasts would have declined to meet, and during the fishing season were diligent in their calling, and made a good deal of money; but when the weather was such that they could not go to sea, when their nets were in order, and nothing special requiring to be done, they would have bouts of hard drinking, and spend a great portion of what ought to have been their provision for the winter.

Their women were in general coarse in manners and rude in speech; often of great strength and courage, and of strongly marked character. They were almost invariably the daughters of fishermen, for a wife taken from among the rural population would have been all but useless in regard of the peculiar duties required of her. If these were less dangerous than those of their husbands, they were quite as laborious, and less interesting. The most severe consisted in carrying the fish into the country for sale, in a huge creel or basket, which when full was sometimes more than a man could lift to place on the woman's back. With this burden, kept in its place by a band across her chest, she would walk as many as twenty miles, arriving at some inland town early in the forenoon, in time to dispose of her fish for the requirements of the day. I may add that, although her eldest child was probably born within a few weeks after her marriage, infidelity was almost unknown amongst them.

In some respects, although in none of its good qualities, Mrs. Mair was an exception from her class. Her mother had been the daughter of a small farmer, and she had well to do relations in an inland parish; but how much these facts were concerned in the result it would be hard to say: certainly she was one of those elect whom Nature sends into the world for the softening and elevation of her other children. She was still slight and graceful, with a clear complexion, and the prettiest teeth possible; the former two at least of which advantages she must have lost long before, had it not been that, while her husband's prudence had rendered hard work less imperative, he had a singular care over her good looks; and that a rough, honest, elder sister of his lived with them, whom it would have been no kindness to keep from the hardest work, seeing it was only through such that she could have found a sufficiency of healthy interest in life. While Janet Mair carried the creel, Annie only assisted in making the nets, and in cleaning and drying the fish, of which they cured considerable quantities; these, with her household and maternal duties, afforded her ample occupation. Their children were well trained, and being of necessity, from the narrowness of their house accommodation, a great deal with their parents, heard enough to make them think after their faculty.

The mad laird was, as I have said, a visitor at their house oftener than anywhere else. On such occasions he slept in a garret accessible by a ladder from the ground floor, which consisted only of a kitchen and a closet. Little Phemy Mair was therefore familiar with his appearance, his ways, and his speech; and she was a favourite with him, although hitherto his shyness had been sufficient to prevent any approach to intimacy with even a child of ten.

When the poor fellow had got some little distance beyond the boats, he stopped and withdrew his hands from his ears: in rushed the sound of the sea, the louder that the caverns of his brain had been so long closed to its entrance. With a moan of dismay he once more pressed his palms against them, and thus deafened, shouted with a voice of agony into the noise of the rising tide: "I dinna ken whaur I come frae!" after which cry, wrung from the grief of human ignorance, he once more took to his heels, though with far less swiftness than before, and fled stumbling and scrambling over the rocks.

Scarcely had he vanished from view of the boats, when Phemy scrambled out of her big mussell shell. Its upheaved side being toward the boat at which her father was at work, she escaped unperceived, and so ran along the base of the promontory, where the rough way was perhaps easier to the feet of a child content to take smaller steps and climb or descend by the help of more insignificant inequalities. She came within sight of the laird just as he turned into the mouth of a well known cave and vanished.

Phemy was one of those rare and blessed natures which have endless courage because they have no distrust, and she ran straight into the cave after him, without even first stopping to look in.

It was not a very interesting cave to look into. The strata of which it was composed, upheaved almost to the perpendicular, shaped an opening like the half of a Gothic arch divided vertically and leaning over a little to one side, which opening rose to the full height of the cave, and seemed to lay bare every corner of it to a single glance. In length it was only about four or five times its width. The floor was smooth and dry, consisting of hard rock. The walls and roof were jagged with projections and shadowed with recesses, but there was little to rouse any frightful fancies.

When Phemy entered, the laird was nowhere to be seen. But she went straight to the back of the cave, to its farthest visible point. There she rounded a projection and began an ascent which only familiarity with rocky ways could have enabled such a child to accomplish. At the top she passed through another opening, and by a longer and more gently sloping descent reached the floor of a second cave, as level and nearly as smooth as a table. On her left hand, what light managed to creep through the tortuous entrance was caught and reflected in a dull glimmer from the undefined surface of a well of fresh water which lay in a sort of basin in the rock: on a bedded stone beside it sat the laird, with his head in his hands, his elbows on his knees, and his hump upheaved above his head, like Mount Sinai over the head of Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress.

As his hands were still pressed on his ears, he heard nothing of Phemy's approach, and she stood for a while staring at him in the vague glimmer, apparently with no anxiety as to what was to come next.

Weary at length—for the forlorn man continued movelessly sunk in his own thoughts, or what he had for such—the eyes of the child began to wander about the darkness, to which they had already got so far accustomed as to make the most of the scanty light. Presently she fancied she saw something glitter, away in the darkness—two things: they must be eyes!—the eyes of an otter or of a polecat, in which creatures the caves along the shore abounded. Seized with sudden fright, she ran to the laird and laid her hand on his shoulder, crying,

"Leuk, laird, leuk!"

He started to his feet and gazed bewildered at the child, rubbing his eyes once and again. She stood between the well and the entrance, so that all the light there was, gathered upon her pale face.

"Whaur do ye come frae?" he cried.

"I cam frae the auld boat," she answered.

"What do ye want wi' me?"

"Naething, sir; I only cam to see hoo ye was gettin' on. I wadna hae disturbit ye, sir, but I saw the twa een o' a wullcat, or sic like, glowerin' awa yonner i' the mirk, an' they fleyt me 'at I grippit ye."

"Weel, weel; sit ye doon, bairnie," said the mad laird in a soothing voice; "the wullcat sanna touch ye. Ye're no fleyt at me, are ye?"

"Na!" answered the child. "What for sud I be fleyt at you, sir? Phemy Mair."

"Eh, bairnie! it 's you, is't?" he returned in tones of satisfaction, for he had not hitherto recognised her. "Sit ye doon, sit ye doon, an' we'll see about it a'."

Phemy obeyed, and seated herself on the nearest projection.

The laird placed himself beside her, and once more buried his face, but not his ears, in his hands. Nothing entered them, however, but the sound of the rising tide, for Phemy sat by him in the faintly glimmering dusk, as without fear felt, so without word spoken.

The evening crept on, and the night came down, but all the effect of the growing darkness was that the child drew gradually nearer to her uncouth companion, until at length her hand stole into his, her head sank upon his shoulder, his arm went round her to hold her safe, and thus she fell fast asleep. After a while, the laird gently roused her and took her home, on their way warning her, in strange yet to her comprehensible utterance, to say nothing of where she had found him, for if she exposed his place of refuge, wicked people would take him, and he should never see her again.

# CHAPTER V: LADY FLORIMEL

All the coast to the east of the little harbour was rock, bold and high, of a grey and brown hard stone, which after a mighty sweep, shot out northward, and closed in the bay on that side with a second great promontory. The long curved strip of sand on the west, reaching to the promontory of Scaurnose, was the only open portion of the coast for miles. Here the coasting vessel gliding past gained a pleasant peep of open fields, belts of wood and farm houses, with now and then a glimpse of a great house amidst its trees. In the distance one or two bare solitary hills, imposing in aspect only from their desolation, for their form gave no effect to their altitude, rose to the height of over a thousand feet.

On this comparatively level part of the shore, parallel with its line, and at some distance beyond the usual high water mark, the waves of ten thousand northern storms had cast up a long dune or bank of sand, terminating towards the west within a few yards of a huge solitary rock of the ugly kind called conglomerate, which must have been separated from the roots of the promontory by the rush of waters at unusually high tides, for in winter they still sometimes rounded the rock, and running down behind the dune, turned it into a long island. The sand on the inland side of the dune, covered with short sweet grass, browsed on by sheep, and with the largest and reddest of daisies, was thus occasionally swept by wild salt waves, and at times, when the northern wind blew straight as an arrow and keen as a sword from the regions of endless snow, lay under a sheet of gleaming ice.

The sun had been up for some time in a cloudless sky. The wind had changed to the south, and wafted soft country odours to the shore, in place of sweeping to inland farms the scents of seaweed and broken salt waters, mingled with a suspicion of icebergs. From what was called the Seaton, or seatown, of Portlossie, a crowd of cottages occupied entirely by fisherfolk, a solitary figure was walking westward along this grass at the back of the dune, singing. On his left hand the ground rose to the high road; on his right was the dune, interlaced and bound together by the long clasping roots of the coarse bent, without which its sands would have been but the sport of every wind that blew. It shut out from him all sight of the sea, but the moan and rush of the rising tide sounded close behind it. At his back rose the town of Portlossie, high above the harbour and the Seaton, with its houses of grey and brown stone, roofed with blue slates and red tiles. It was no highland town—scarce one within it could speak the highland tongue, yet down from its high streets on the fitful air of the morning now floated intermittently the sound of bagpipes—borne winding from street to street, and loud blown to wake the sleeping inhabitants and let them know that it was now six of the clock.

He was a youth of about twenty, with a long, swinging, heavy footed stride, which took in the ground rapidly—a movement unlike that of the other men of the place, who always walked slowly, and never but on dire compulsion ran. He was rather tall, and large limbed. His dress was like that of a fisherman, consisting of blue serge trowsers, a shirt striped blue and white, and a Guernsey frock, which he carried flung across his shoulder. On his head he wore a round blue bonnet, with a tuft of scarlet in the centre.

His face was more than handsome—with large features, not finely cut, and a look of mingled nobility and ingenuousness—the latter amounting to simplicity, or even innocence; while the clear outlook from his full and well opened hazel eyes indicated both courage and promptitude. His dark brown hair came in large curling masses from under his bonnet. It was such a form and face as would have drawn every eye in a crowded thoroughfare.

About the middle of the long sandhill, a sort of wide embrasure was cut in its top, in which stood an old fashioned brass swivel gun: when the lad reached the place, he sprang up the sloping side of the dune, seated himself on the gun, drew from his trowsers a large silver watch, regarded it steadily for a few minutes, replaced it, and took from his pocket a flint and steel, wherewith he kindled a bit of touch paper, which, rising, he applied to the vent of the swivel. Followed a great roar.

It echoes had nearly died away, when a startled little cry reached his keen ear, and looking along the shore to discover whence it came, he spied a woman on a low rock that ran a little way out into the water. She had half risen from a sitting posture, and apparently her cry was the result of the discovery that the rising tide had overreached and surrounded her. There was no danger whatever, but the girl might well shrink from plunging into the clear beryl depth in which swayed the seaweed clothing the slippery slopes of the rock. He rushed from the sandhill, crying, as he approached her, "Dinna be in a hurry, mem; bide till I come to ye," and running straight into the water struggled through the deepening tide, the distance being short and the depth almost too shallow for swimming. In a moment he was by her side, scarcely saw the bare feet she had been bathing in the water, heeded as little the motion of the hand which waved him back, caught her in his arms like a baby, and had her safe on the shore ere she could utter a word; nor did he stop until he had carried her to the slope of the sandhill, where he set her gently down, and without a suspicion of the liberty he was taking, and filled only with a passion of service, was proceeding to dry her feet with the frock which he had dropped there as he ran to her assistance.

"Let me alone, pray," cried the girl with a half amused indignation, drawing back her feet and throwing down a book she carried that she might the better hide them with her skirt. But although she shrank from his devotion, she could neither mistake it nor help being pleased with his kindness. Probably she had never before been immediately indebted to such an ill clad individual of the human race, but even in such a costume she could not fail to see he was a fine fellow. Nor was the impression disturbed when he opened his mouth and spoke in the broad dialect of the country, for she had no associations to cause her to misinterpret its homeliness as vulgarity.

"Whaur's yer stockin's, mem?" he said.

"You gave me no time to bring them away, you caught me up so— rudely," answered the girl half querulously, but in such lovely speech as had never before greeted his Scotish ears.

Before the words were well beyond her lips he was already on his way back to the rock, running, as he walked, with great, heavy footed strides. The abandoned shoes and stockings were in imminent danger of being floated off by the rising water, but he dashed in, swam a few strokes, caught them up, waded back to the shore, and, leaving a wet track all the way behind him but carrying the rescued clothing at arm's length before him, rejoined their owner. Spreading his frock out before her, he laid the shoes and stockings upon it, and, observing that she continued to keep her feet hidden under the skirts of her dress, turned his back and stood.

"Why don't you go away?" said the girl, venturing one set of toes from under their tent, but hesitating to proceed further in the business.

Without word or turn of head he walked away.

Either flattered by his absolute obedience, and persuaded that he was a true squire, or unwilling to forego what amusement she might gain from him, she drew in her half issuing foot, and, certainly urged in part by an inherent disposition to tease, spoke again.

"You're not going away without thanking me?" she said.

"What for, mem?" he returned simply, standing stock still again with his back towards her.

"You needn't stand so. You don't think I would go on dressing while you remained in sight?"

"I was as guid's awa', mem," he said, and turning a glowing face, looked at her for a moment, then cast his eyes on the ground.

"Tell me what you mean by not thanking me," she insisted.

"They wad be dull thanks, mem, that war thankit afore I kenned what for."

"For allowing you to carry me ashore, of course."

"Be thankit, mem, wi' a' my hert. Will I gang doon o' my knees?"

"No. Why should you go on your knees?"

"'Cause ye're 'maist ower bonny to luik at stan'in', mem, an' feared for angerin' ye."

"Don't say ma'am to me."

"What am I to say, than, mem?—I ask yer pardon, mem."

"Say my lady. That's how people speak to me."

"I thocht ye bude (behoved) to be somebody by ordinar', my leddy! That'll be hoo ye're so terrible bonny," he returned, with some tremulousness in his tone. "But ye maun put on yer hose, my leddy, or ye'll get yer feet cauld, and that's no guid for the likes o' you."

The form of address she prescribed, conveyed to him no definite idea of rank. It but added intensity to the notion of her being a lady, as distinguished from one of the women of his own condition in life.

"And pray what is to become of you," she returned, "with your clothes as wet as water can make them?"

"The saut water kens me ower weel to do me ony ill," returned the lad. "I gang weet to the skin mony a day frae mornin' till nicht, and mony a nicht frae nicht till mornin'—at the heerin' fishin', ye ken, my leddy."

One might well be inclined to ask what could have tempted her to talk in such a familiar way to a creature like him—human indeed, but separated from her by a gulf more impassable far than that which divided her from the thrones, principalities, and powers of the upper regions? And how is the fact to be accounted for, that here she put out a dainty foot, and reaching for one of her stockings, began to draw it gently over the said foot? Either her sense of his inferiority was such that she regarded his presence no more than that of a dog, or, possibly, she was tempted to put his behaviour to the test. He, on his part, stood quietly regarding the operation, either that, with the instinct of an inborn refinement, he was aware he ought not to manifest more shamefacedness than the lady herself, or that he was hardly more accustomed to the sight of gleaming fish than the bare feet of maidens.

" thinkin', my leddy," he went on, in absolute simplicity, "that sma' fut o' yer ain has danced mony a braw dance on mony a braw flure."

"How old do you take me for then?" she rejoined, and went on drawing the garment over her foot by the shortest possible stages.

"Ye'll no be muckle ower twenty," he said.

" only sixteen," she returned, laughing merrily.

"What will ye be or ye behaud!" he exclaimed, after a brief pause of astonishment.

"Do you ever dance in this part of the country?" she asked, heedless of his surprise.

"No that muckle, at least amo' the fisherfowks, excep' it be at a weddin'. I was at ane last nicht."

"And did you dance?"

"'Deed did I, my leddy. I danced the maist o' the lasses clean aff o' their legs."

"What made you so cruel?"

"Weel, ye see, mem,—I mean my leddy,—fowk said I was ill aboot the bride; an' sae I bude to dance 't oot o' their heids."

"And how much truth was there in what they said?" she asked, with a sly glance up in the handsome, now glowing face.

"Gien there was ony, there was unco little," he replied. "The chield's walcome till her for me. But she was the bonniest lassie we had.—It was what we ca' a penny weddin'," he went on, as if willing to change the side of the subject.

"And what's a penny wedding?"

"It's a' kin' o' a custom amo' the fishers. There's some gey puir fowk amon' 's, ye see, an' when a twa o' them merries, the lave o' 's wants to gie them a bit o' a start like. Sae we a' gang to the weddin' an' eats an' drinks plenty, an' pays for a' 'at we hae; and they mak' a guid profit out o' 't, for the things doesna cost them nearhan' sae muckle as we pay. So they hae a guid han'fu' ower for the plenishin'."

"And what do they give you to eat and drink?" asked the girl, making talk.

"Ow, skate an' mustard to eat, an' whusky to drink," answered the lad, laughing. "But it 's mair for the fun. I dinna care muckle about whusky an' that kin' o' thing mysel'. It's the fiddles an the dancin' 'at I like."

"You have music, then?"

"Ay; jist the fiddles an' the pipes."

"The bagpipes, do you mean?"

"Ay; my gran'father plays them."

"But you're not in the Highlands here: how come you to have bagpipes?"

"It's a stray bag, an' no more. But the fowk here likes the cry o' 't well eneuch, an' hae 't to wauk them ilka mornin'. Yon was my gran'father ye heard afore I fired the gun. Yon was his pipes waukin' them, honest fowk."

"And what made you fire the gun in that reckless way? Don't you know it is very dangerous?"

"Dangerous mem—my leddy, I mean! There was naething intill 't but a pennyworth o' blastin' pooder. It wadna blaw the froth aff o' the tap o' a jaw (billow)."

"It nearly blew me out of my small wits, though."

" verra sorry it frichtit ye. But, gien I had seen ye, I bude to fire the gun."

"I don't understand you quite; but I suppose you mean it was your business to fire the gun."

"Jist that, my leddy."

"Why?"

"'Cause it 's been decreet i' the toon cooncil that at sax o' the clock ilka mornin' that gun's to be fired—at least sae lang's my lord, the marquis, is at Portlossie Hoose. Ye see it 's a royal brugh, this, an' it costs but aboot a penny, an' it 's gran' like to hae a sma' cannon to fire. An' gien I was to neglec' it, my gran'father wad gang on skirlin'—what's the English for skirlin', my leddy—skirlin' o' the pipes?"

"I don't know. But from the sound of the word I should suppose it stands for screaming."

"Aye, that's it; only screamin's no sae guid as skirlin'. My gran'father's an auld man, as I was gaein' on to say, an' has hardly breath eneuch to fill the bag; but he wad be efter dirkin' onybody 'at said sic a thing, and till he heard that gun he wad gang on blawin' though he sud burst himsel.' There's naebody kens the smeddum in an auld hielan' man!"

By the time the conversation had reached this point, the lady had got her shoes on, had taken up her book from the sand, and was now sitting with it in her lap. No sound reached them but that of the tide, for the scream of the bagpipes had ceased the moment the swivel was fired. The sun was growing hot, and the sea, although so far in the cold north, was gorgeous in purple and green, suffused as with the overpowering pomp of a peacock's plumage in the sun. Away to the left the solid promontory trembled against the horizon, as if ready to dissolve and vanish between the bright air and the lucid sea that fringed its base with white. The glow of a young summer morning pervaded earth and sea and sky, and swelled the heart of the youth as he stood in unconscious bewilderment before the self possession of the girl. She was younger than he, and knew far less that was worth knowing, yet had a world of advantage over him—not merely from the effect of her presence on one who had never seen anything half so beautiful, but from a certain readiness of surface thought, combined with the sweet polish of her speech, and an assurance of superiority which appeared to them both to lift her, like one of the old immortals, far above the level of the man whom she favoured with her passing converse. What in her words, as here presented only to the eye, may seem brusqueness or even forwardness, was so tempered, so toned, so fashioned by the naivete with which she spoke, that it sounded in his ears as the utterance of absolute condescension. As to her personal appearance, the lad might well have taken her for twenty, for she looked more of a woman than, tall and strongly built as he was, he looked of a man. She was rather tall, rather slender, finely formed, with small hands and feet, and full throat. Her hair was of a dark brown; her eyes of such a blue that no one could have suggested grey; her complexion fair—a little freckled, which gave it the warmest tint it had; her nose nearly straight,

her mouth rather large but well formed; and her forehead, as much of it as was to be seen under a garden hat, rose with promise above a pair of dark and finely pencilled eyebrows.

The description I have here given may be regarded as occupying the space of a brief silence, during which the lad stood motionless, like one awaiting further command.

"Why don't you go?" said the lady. "I want to read my book."

He gave a great sigh, as if waking from a pleasant dream, took off his bonnet with a clumsy movement which yet had in it a grace worthy of a Stuart court, and descending the dune walked away along the sands towards the sea town.

When he had gone about a couple of hundred yards, he looked back involuntarily. The lady had vanished. He concluded that she had crossed to the other side of the dune; but when he had gone so far on his way to the village as to clear the eastern end of the sandhill, and there turned and looked up its southern slope, she was still nowhere to be seen. The old highland stories of his grandfather came crowding to mind, and, altogether human as she had appeared, he almost doubted whether the sea, from which he had thought he rescued her, were not her native element. The book, however, not to mention the shoes and stockings, was against the supposition. Anyhow, he had seen a vision of some order or other, as certainly as if an angel from heaven had appeared to him, for the waters of his mind had been troubled with a new sense of grace and beauty, giving an altogether fresh glory to existence.

Of course no one would dream of falling in love with an unearthly creature, even an angel; at least, something homely must mingle with the glory ere that become possible; and as to this girl, the youth could scarcely have regarded her with a greater sense of far offness had he known her for the daughter of a king of the sea—one whose very element was essentially death to him as life to her. Still he walked home as if the heavy boots he wore were wings at his heels, like those of the little Eurus or Boreas that stood blowing his trumpet for ever in the round open temple which from the top of a grassy hill in the park overlooked the Seaton.

"Sic een!" he kept saying to himself; "an' sic sma' white han's! an' sic a bonny flit! Eh hoo she wad glitter throu' the water in a bag net! Faith! gien she war to sing 'come doon' to me, I wad gang. Wad that be to lowse baith sowl an' body, I wonner? I'll see what Maister Graham says to that. It's a fine question to put till 'im: 'Gien a body was to gang wi' a mermaid, wha they say has nae sowl to be saved, wad that be the loss o' his sowl, as weel's o' the bodily life o' 'im?"'

# CHAPTER VI: DUNCAN MACPHAIL

The sea town of Portlossie was as irregular a gathering of small cottages as could be found on the surface of the globe. They faced every way, turned their backs and gables every way—only of the roofs could you predict the position; were divided from each other by every sort of small, irregular space and passage, and looked like a national assembly debating a constitution. Close behind the Seaton, as it was called, ran a highway, climbing far above the chimneys of the village to the level of the town above. Behind this road, and separated from it by a high wall of stone, lay a succession of heights and hollows covered with grass. In front of the cottages lay sand and sea. The place was cleaner than most fishing villages, but so closely built, so thickly inhabited, and so pervaded with "a very ancient and fishlike smell," that but for the besom of the salt north wind it must have been unhealthy. Eastward the houses could extend no further for the harbour, and westward no further for a small river that crossed the sands to find the sea—discursively and merrily at low water, but with sullen, submissive mingling when banked back by the tide.

Avoiding the many nets extended long and wide on the grassy sands, the youth walked through the tide swollen mouth of the river, and passed along the front of the village until he arrived at a house, the small window in the seaward gable of which was filled with a curious collection of things for sale—dusty looking sweets in a glass bottle; gingerbread cakes in the shape of large hearts, thickly studded with sugar plums of rainbow colours, invitingly poisonous; strings of tin covers for tobacco pipes, overlapping each other like fish scales; toys, and tapes, and needles, and twenty other kinds of things, all huddled together.

Turning the corner of this house, he went down the narrow passage between it and the next, and in at its open door. But the moment it was entered it lost all appearance of a shop, and the room with the tempting window showed itself only as a poor kitchen with an earthen floor.

"Weel, hoo did the pipes behave themsels the day, daddy?" said the youth as he strode in.

"Och, she'll pe peing a coot poy today," returned the tremulous voice of a grey headed old man, who was leaning over a small peat fire on the hearth, sifting oatmeal through the fingers of his left hand into a pot, while he stirred the boiling mess with a short stick held in his right.

It had grown to be understood between them that the pulmonary conditions of the old piper should be attributed not to his internal, but his external lungs—namely, the bag of his pipes. Both sets had of late years manifested strong symptoms of decay, and decided measures had had to be again and again resorted to in the case of the latter to put off its evil day, and keep within it the breath of its musical existence. The youth's question, then, as to the behaviour of the pipes, was in reality an inquiry after the condition of his grandfather's lungs, which, for their part, grew yearly more and more asthmatic: notwithstanding which Duncan MacPhail would not hear of resigning the dignity of town piper.

"That's fine, daddy," returned the youth. "Wull I mak oot the parritch? thinkin ye've had eneuch o' hingin' ower the fire this het mornin'."

"No, sir," answered Duncan. "She'll pe perfectly able to make ta parritch herself, my poy Malcolm. Ta tay will tawn when her poy must make his own parritch, an' she'll be wantin' no more parritch, but haf to trink ta rainwater, and no trop of ta uisgebeatha to put into it, my poy Malcolm."

His grandson was quite accustomed to the old man's heathenish mode of regarding his immediate existence after death as a long confinement in the grave, and generally had a word or two ready wherewith to combat the frightful notion; but, as he spoke, Duncan lifted the pot from the fire, and set it on its three legs on the deal table in the middle of the room, adding:

"Tere, my man—tere's ta parritch! And was it ta putter, or ta traicle, or ta pottle o' peer, she would be havin' for kitchie tis fine mornin'?"

This point settled, the two sat down to eat their breakfast; and no one would have discovered, from the manner in which the old man helped himself, nor yet from the look of his eyes, that he was stone blind. It came neither of old age nor disease—he had been born blind. His eyes, although large and wide, looked like those of a sleep walker—open with shut sense; the shine in them was all reflected light—glitter, no glow; and their colour was so pale that they suggested some horrible sight as having driven from them hue and vision together.

"Haf you eated enough, my son?" he said, when he heard Malcolm lay down his spoon.

"Ay, plenty, thank ye, daddy, and they were richt weel made," replied the lad, whose mode of speech was entirely different from his grandfather's: the latter had learned English as a foreign language, but could not speak Scotch, his mother tongue being Gaelic.

As they rose from the table, a small girl, with hair wildly suggestive of insurrection and conflagration, entered, and said, in a loud screetch—"Maister MacPhail, my mither wants a pot o' bleckin', an' ye're to be sure an' gie her't gweed, she says."

"Fery coot, my chilt, Jeannie; but young Malcolm and old Tuncan hasn't made teir prayers yet, and you know fery well tat she won't sell pefore she's made her prayers. Tell your mother tat she'll pe bringin' ta blackin' when she comes to look to ta lamp."

The child ran off without response. Malcolm lifted the pot from the table and set it on the hearth; put the plates together and the spoons, and set them on a chair, for there was no dresser; tilted the table, and wiped it hearthward—then from a shelf took down and laid upon it a bible, before which he seated himself with an air of reverence. The old man sat down on a low chair by the chimney corner, took off his bonnet, closed his eyes and murmured some almost inaudible words; then repeated in Gaelic the first line of the hundred and third psalm—

O m' anam, beannuich thus' a nis

–and raised a tune of marvellous wail. Arrived at the end of the line, he repeated the process with the next, and so went on, giving every line first in the voice of speech and then in the voice of song, through three stanzas of eight lines each. And no less strange was the singing than the tune—wild and wailful as the wind of his native desolations, or as the sound of his own pipes borne thereon; and apparently all but lawless, for the multitude of so called grace notes, hovering and fluttering endlessly around the centre tone like the comments on a text, rendered it nearly impossible to unravel from them the air even of a known tune. It had in its kind the same liquid uncertainty of confluent sound which had hitherto rendered it impossible for Malcolm to learn more than a few of the common phrases of his grandfather's mother tongue.

The psalm over, during which the sightless eyeballs of the singer had been turned up towards the rafters of the cottage—a sign surely that the germ of light, "the sunny seed," as Henry Vaughan calls it, must be in him, else why should he lift his eyes when he thought upward?—Malcolm read a chapter of the Bible, plainly the next in an ordered succession, for it could never have been chosen or culled; after which they kneeled together, and the old man poured out a prayer, beginning in a low, scarcely audible voice, which rose at length to a loud, modulated chant. Not a sentence, hardly a phrase, of the utterance, did his grandson lay hold of; but there were a few inhabitants of the place who could have interpreted it, and it was commonly believed that one part of his devotions was invariably a prolonged petition for vengeance on Campbell of Glenlyon, the main instrument in the massacre of Glenco.

He could have prayed in English, and then his grandson might have joined in his petitions, but the thought of such a thing would never have presented itself to him. Nay, although, understanding both languages, he used that which was unintelligible to the lad, he yet regarded himself as the party who had the right to resent the consequent schism. Such a conversation as now followed was no new thing after prayers.

"I could fery well wish, Malcolm, my son," said the old man, "tat you would be learnin' to speak your own lancuach. It is all fery well for ta Sassenach (Saxon, i.e., non-Celtic) podies to read ta Piple in English, for it will be pleasing ta Maker not to make tem cawpable of ta Gaelic, no more tan

monkeys; but for all tat it 's not ta vord of God. Ta Gaelic is ta lancuach of ta carden of Aiden, and no doubt but it pe ta lancuach in which ta Shepherd calls his sheep on ta everlastin' hills. You see, Malcolm, it must be so, for how can a mortal man speak to his God in anything put Gaelic? When Mr Craham—no, not Mr Craham, ta coot man; it was ta new Minister—he speak an' say to her: 'Mr MacPhail, you ought to make your prayers in Enclish,' I was fery wrathful, and I answered and said: 'Mr Downey, do you tare to suppose tat God doesn't prefer ta Gaelic to ta Sassenach tongue!'—'Mr MacPhail,' says he, 'it'll pe for your poy I mean it How's ta lad to learn ta way of salvation if you speak to your God in his presence in a strange tongue? So I was opedient to his vord, and ta next efening I tid kneel town in Sassenach and I tid make begin. But, ochone! she wouldn't go; her tongue would be cleafing to ta roof of her mouth; ta claymore would be sticking rusty in ta scappard; for her heart she was ashamed to speak to ta Hielan'man's Maker in ta Sassenach tongue. You must pe learning ta Gaelic, or you'll not pe peing worthy to pe her nain son, Malcolm."

"But daddy, wha's to learn me?" asked his grandson, gayly.

"Learn you, Malcolm! Ta Gaelic is ta lancuach of Nature, and wants no learning. I nefer did pe learning it, yat I nefer haf to say to myself 'What is it she would be saying?' when I speak ta Gaelic; put she always has to set ta tead men—that is ta vords—on their feet, and put tem in pattle array, when she would pe speaking ta dull mechanic English. When she opens her mouth to it, ta Gaelic comes like a spring of pure water, Malcolm. Ta plenty of it must run out. Try it now, Malcolm. Shust oppen your mouth in ta Gaelic shape, and see if ta Gaelic will not pe falling from it."

Seized with a merry fit, Malcolm did open his mouth in the Gaelic shape, and sent from it a strange gabble, imitative of the most frequently recurring sounds of his grandfather's speech.

"Hoo will that du, daddy?" he asked, after jabbering gibberish for the space of a minute.

"It will not be paad for a peginning, Malcolm. She cannot say it shust pe vorts, or tat tere pe much of ta sense in it; but it pe fery like what ta pabes will say pefore tey pekin to speak it properly. So it 's all fery well, and if you will only pe putting your mouth in ta Gaelic shape often enough, ta sounds will soon pe taking ta shape of it, and ta vorts will be coming trough ta mists, and pefore you know, you'll pe peing a creat credit to your cranfather, my boy, Malcolm."

A silence followed, for Malcolm's attempt had not had the result he anticipated: he had thought only to make his grandfather laugh. Presently the old man resumed, in the kindest voice:

"And tere's another thing, Malcolm, tat's much wanting to you: you'll never pe a man—not to speak of a pard like your cranfather—if you'll not pe learning to play on ta bagpipes."

Malcolm, who had been leaning against the chimney lug while his grandfather spoke, moved gently round behind his chair, reached out for the pipes where they lay in a corner at the old man's side, and catching them up softly, put the mouthpiece to his lips. With a few vigorous blasts he filled the bag, and out burst the double droning bass, while the youth's fingers, clutching the chanter as by the throat, at once compelled its screeches into shape far better, at least, than his lips had been able to give to the crude material of Gaelic. He played the only reel he knew, but that with vigour and effect.

At the first sound of its notes the old man sprung to his feet and began capering to the reel—partly in delight with the music, but far more in delight with the musician, while, ever and anon, with feeble yell, he uttered the unspellable Hoogh of the Highlander, and jumped, as he thought, high in the air, though his failing limbs, alas! lifted his feet scarce an inch from the floor.

"Aigh! aigh!" he sighed at length, yielding the contest between his legs and the lungs of the lad—"aigh! aigh! she'll die happy! she'll die happy! Hear till her poy, how he makes ta pipes speak ta true Gaelic! Ta pest o' Gaelic, tat! Old Tuncan's pipes 'll not know how to be talking Sassenach. See to it! see to it! He had put to blow in at ta one end, and out came ta reel at the other. Hoogh! hoogh! Play us ta Righil Thulachan, Malcolm, my chief!"

"I kenna reel, strathspey, nor lilt, but jist that burd alane, daddy."

"Give tem to me, my poy!" cried the old piper, reaching out a hand as eager to clutch the uncouth instrument as the miser's to finger his gold; "hear well to me as I play, and you'll soon be able to play pibroch or coronach with the best piper between Cape Wrath and ta Mull o' Cantyre."

He played tune after tune until his breath failed him, and an exhausted grunt of the drone—in the middle of a coronach, followed by an abrupt pause, revealed the emptiness of both lungs and bag. Then first he remembered his object, forgotten the moment he had filled his bag.

"Now, Malcolm," he said, offering the pipes to his grandson; "you play tat after."

He had himself of course, learned all by the ear, but could hardly have been serious in requesting Malcolm to follow him through such a succession of tortuous mazes.

"I haena a memory up to that, daddy; but I s' get a hand o' Mr Graham's flute music, and maybe that'll help me a bit.—Wadna ye be takin' hame Meg Partan's blackin' 'at ye promised her?"

"Surely, my son. She should always be keeping her promises." He rose, and getting a small stone bottle and his stick from the corner between the projecting inglecheek and the window, left the house, to walk with unerring steps through the labyrinth of the village, threading his way from passage to passage, and avoiding pools and projecting stones, not to say houses, and human beings. His eyes, or indeed perhaps rather his whole face, appeared to possess an ethereal sense as of touch, for, without the slightest contact in the ordinary sense of the word, he was aware of the neighbourhood of material objects, as if through the pulsations of some medium to others imperceptible. He could, with perfect accuracy, tell the height of any wall or fence within a few feet of him; could perceive at once whether it was high or low or half tide, and that merely by going out in front of the houses and turning his face with its sightless eyeballs towards the sea; knew whether a woman who spoke to him had a child in her arms or not; and, indeed, was believed to know sooner than ordinary mortals that one was about to become a mother.

He was a strange figure to look upon in that lowland village, for he invariably wore the highland dress: in truth, he had never had a pair of trowsers on his legs, and was far from pleased that his grandson clothed himself in such contemptible garments. But, contrasted with the showy style of his costume, there was something most pathetic in the blended pallor of hue into which the originally gorgeous colours of his kilt had faded—noticeable chiefly on weekdays, when he wore no sporran; for the kilt, encountering, from its loose construction, comparatively little strain or friction, may reach an antiquity unknown to the garments of the low country, and, while perfectly decent, yet look ancient exceedingly. On Sundays, however, he made the best of himself, and came out like a belated and aged butterfly—with his father's sporran, or tasselled goatskin purse, in front of him, his grandfather's dirk at his side, his great grandfather's skene dhu, or little black hafted knife, stuck in the stocking of his right leg, and a huge round brooch of brass—nearly half a foot in diameter, and, Mr Graham said, as old as the battle of Harlaw—on his left shoulder. In these adornments he would walk proudly to church, leaning on the arm of his grandson.

"The piper's gey (considerably) brokken-like the day," said one of the fishermen's wives to a neighbour as he passed them—the fact being that he had not yet recovered from his second revel in the pipes so soon after the exhaustion of his morning's duty, and was, in consequence, more asthmatic than usual.

"I doobt he'll be slippin' awa some cauld nicht," said the other: "his leevin' breath's ill to get."

"Ay; he has to warstle for't, puir man! Weel, he'll be missed, the blin' body! It's exterordinor hoo he's managed to live, and bring up sic a fine lad as that Malcolm o' his."

"Weel, ye see, Providence has been kin' till him as weel 's ither blin' craturs. The toon's pipin' 's no to be despised; an' there's the cryin', an' the chop, an' the lamps. 'Deed he's been an eident (diligent) cratur—an' for a blin' man, as ye say, it 's jist exterordinar."

"Div ye min' whan first he cam' to the toon, lass?"

"Ay; what wad hinner me min'in' that? It's nae sae lang."

"Ma'colm 'at's sic a fine laad noo, they tell me wasna muckle bigger nor a gey haddie (tolerable haddock)."

"But the auld man was an auld man than, though nae doobt he's unco' failed sin syne."

"A dochter's bairn, they say, the laad."

"Ay, they say, but wha kens? Duncan could never be gotten to open his mou' as to the father or mither o' 'im, an' sae it weel may be as they say. It's nigh twenty year noo, thinkin' sin he made's appearance. Ye wasna come frae Scaurnose er' than."

"Some fowk says the auld man's name's no MacPhail, an' he maun hae come here in hidin' for some rouch job or ither 'at he's been mixed up wi'.

"I s' believe nae ill o' sic a puir, hairmless body. Fowk 'at maks their ain livin', wantin' the een to guide them, canna be that far aff the straucht. Guid guide 's! we hae eneuch to answer for, oor ainsels, ohn passed (without passing) jeedgment upo ane anither."

"I was but tellin' ye what fowk telled me," returned the younger woman.

"Ay, ay, lass; I ken that, for I ken there was fowk to tell ye."

# CHAPTER VII: ALEXANDER GRAHAM

As soon as his grandfather left the house, Malcolm went out also, closing the door behind him, and turning the key, but leaving it in the lock. He ascended to the upper town, only, however, to pass through its main street, at the top of which he turned and looked back for a few moments, apparently in contemplation. The descent to the shore was so sudden that he could see nothing of the harbour or of the village he had left—nothing but the blue bay and the filmy mountains of Sutherlandshire, molten by distance into cloudy questions, and looking, betwixt blue sea and blue sky, less substantial than either. After gazing for a moment, he turned again, and held on his way, through fields which no fence parted from the road. The morning was still glorious, the larks right jubilant, and the air filled with the sweet scents of cottage flowers. Across the fields came the occasional low of an ox, and the distant sounds of children at play. But Malcolm saw without noting, and heard without seeding, for his mind was full of speculation concerning the lovely girl, whose vision appeared already far off:—who might she be? whence had she come? whither could she have vanished? That she did not belong to the neighbourhood was certain, he thought; but there was a farm house near the sea town where they let lodgings; and, although it was early in the season, she might belong to some family which had come to spend a few of the summer weeks there; possibly his appearance had prevented her from having her bath that morning. If he should have the good fortune to see her again, he would show her a place far fitter for the purpose—a perfect arbour of rocks, utterly secluded, with a floor of deep sand, and without a hole for crab or lobster.

His road led him in the direction of a few cottages lying in a hollow. Beside them rose a vision of trees, bordered by an ivy grown wall, from amidst whose summits shot the spire of the church; and from beyond the spire, through the trees, came golden glimmers as of vane and crescent and pinnacled ball, that hinted at some shadowy abode of enchantment within; but as he descended the slope towards the cottages the trees gradually rose and shut in everything.

These cottages were far more ancient than the houses of the town, were covered with green thatch, were buried in ivy, and would soon be radiant with roses and honeysuckles. They were gathered irregularly about a gate of curious old ironwork, opening on the churchyard, but more like an entrance to the grounds behind the church, for it told of ancient state, bearing on each of its pillars a great stone heron with a fish in its beak.

This was the quarter whence had come the noises of children, but they had now ceased, or rather sunk into a gentle murmur, which oozed, like the sound of bees from a straw covered beehive, out of a cottage rather larger than the rest, which stood close by the churchyard gate. It was the parish school, and these cottages were all that remained of the old town of Portlossie, which had at one time stretched in a long irregular street almost to the shore. The town cross yet stood, but away solitary on a green hill that overlooked the sands.

During the summer the long walk from the new town to the school and to the church was anything but a hardship: in winter it was otherwise, for then there were days in which few would venture the single mile that separated them.

The door of the school, bisected longitudinally, had one of its halves open, and by it outflowed the gentle hum of the honeybees of learning. Malcolm walked in, and had the whole of the busy scene at once before him. The place was like a barn, open from wall to wall, and from floor to rafters and thatch, browned with the peat smoke of vanished winters. Two thirds of the space were filled with long desks and forms; the other had only the master's desk, and thus afforded room for standing classes. At the present moment it was vacant, for the prayer was but just over, and the Bible class had not been called up: there Alexander Graham, the schoolmaster, descending from his desk, met and welcomed Malcolm with a kind shake of the hand. He was a man of middle height, but very thin; and about five and forty years of age, but looked older, because of his thin grey hair and a stoop in the

shoulders. He was dressed in a shabby black tailcoat, and clean white neckcloth; the rest of his clothes were of parson grey, noticeably shabby also. The quiet sweetness of his smile, and a composed look of submission were suggestive of the purification of sorrow, but were attributed by the townsfolk to disappointment; for he was still but a schoolmaster, whose aim they thought must be a pulpit and a parish. But Mr Graham had been early released from such an ambition, if it had ever possessed him, and had for many years been more than content to give himself to the hopefuller work of training children for the true ends of life: he lived the quietest of studious lives, with an old housekeeper.

Malcolm had been a favourite pupil, and the relation of master and scholar did not cease when the latter saw that he ought to do something to lighten the burden of his grandfather, and so left the school and betook himself to the life of a fisherman—with the slow leave of Duncan, who had set his heart on making a scholar of him, and would never, indeed, had Gaelic been amongst his studies, have been won by the most laboursome petition. He asserted himself perfectly able to provide for both for ten years to come at least, in proof of which he roused the inhabitants of Portlossie, during the space of a whole month, a full hour earlier than usual, with the most terrific blasts of the bagpipes, and this notwithstanding complaint and expostulation on all sides, so that at length the provost had to interfere; after which outburst of defiance to time, however, his energy had begun to decay so visibly that Malcolm gave himself to the pipes in secret, that he might be ready, in case of sudden emergency, to take his grandfather's place; for Duncan lived in constant dread of the hour when his office might be taken from him and conferred on a mere drummer, or, still worse, on a certain ne'er do weel cousin of the provost, so devoid of music as to be capable only of ringing a bell.

"I've had an invitation to Miss Campbell's funeral—Miss Horn's cousin, you know," said Mr Graham, in a hesitating and subdued voice: "could you manage to take the school for me, Malcolm?"

"Yes, sir. There's naething to hinner me. What day is 't upo'?"

"Saturday."

"Verra weel, sir. I s' be here in guid time."

This matter settled, the business of the school, in which, as he did often, Malcolm had come to assist, began. Only a pupil of his own could have worked with Mr Graham, for his mode was very peculiar. But the strangest fact in it would have been the last to reveal itself to an ordinary observer. This was, that he rarely contradicted anything: he would call up the opposing truth, set it face to face with the error, and leave the two to fight it out. The human mind and conscience were, he said, the plains of Armageddon, where the battle of good and evil was for ever raging; and the one business of a teacher was to rouse and urge this battle by leading fresh forces of the truth into the field—forces composed as little as might be of the hireling troops of the intellect, and as much as possible of the native energies of the heart, imagination, and conscience. In a word, he would oppose error only by teaching the truth.

In early life he had come under the influence of the writings of William Law, which he read as one who pondered every doctrine in that light which only obedience to the truth can open upon it. With a keen eye for the discovery of universal law in the individual fact, he read even the marvels of the New Testament practically. Hence, in training his soldiers, every lesson he gave them was a missile; every admonishment of youth or maiden was as the mounting of an armed champion, and the launching of him with a Godspeed into the thick of the fight.

He now called up the Bible class, and Malcolm sat beside and listened. That morning they had to read one of the chapters in the history of Jacob.

"Was Jacob a good man?" he asked, as soon as the reading, each of the scholars in turn taking a verse, was over.

An apparently universal expression of assent followed; halting its wake, however, came the voice of a boy near the bottom of the class:

"Wasna he some dooble, sir?"

"You are right, Sheltie," said the master; "he was double. I must, I find, put the question in another shape:—Was Jacob a bad man?"

Again came such a burst of yesses that it might have been taken for a general hiss. But limping in the rear came again the half dissentient voice of Jamie Joss, whom the master had just addressed as Sheltie:

"Pairtly, sir."

"You think, then, Sheltie, that a man may be both bad and good?"

"I dinna ken, sir. I think he may be whiles ane an' whiles the ither, an' whiles maybe it wad be ill to say whilk. Oor collie's whiles in twa min's whether he'll du what he's telled or no."

"That's the battle of Armageddon, Sheltie, my man. It's aye ragin', ohn gun roared or bayonet clashed. Ye maun up an' do yer best in't, my man. Gien ye dee fechtin' like a man, ye'll flee up wi' a quaiet face an' wide open een; an' there's a great Ane 'at 'll say to ye, 'Weel dune, laddie!' But gien ye gie in to the enemy, he'll turn ye intill a creepin' thing 'at eats dirt; an' there 'll no be a hole in a' the crystal wa' o' the New Jerusalem near eneuch to the grun' to lat ye creep throu'."

As soon as ever Alexander Graham, the polished thinker and sweet mannered gentleman, opened his mouth concerning the things he loved best, that moment the most poetic forms came pouring out in the most rugged speech.

"I reckon, sir," said Sheltie, "Jacob hadna fouchten oot his battle."

"That's jist it, my boy. And because he wouldna get up and fecht manfully, God had to tak him in han'. Ye've heard tell o' generals, when their troops war rinnin' awa', haein' to cut this man doon, shute that ane, and lick anither, till he turned them a' richt face aboot and drave them on to the foe like a spate! And the trouble God took wi' Jacob wasna lost upon him at last."

"An' what cam o' Esau, sir?" asked a pale faced maiden with blue eyes. "He wasna an ill kin' o' a chield—was he, sir?"

"No, Mappy," answered the master; "he was a fine chield, as you say; but he nott (needed) mair time and gentler treatment to mak onything o' him. Ye see he had a guid hert, but was a duller kin' o' cratur a'thegither, and cared for naething he could na see or hanle. He never thoucht muckle aboot God at a'. Jacob was anither sort—a poet kin' o' a man, but a sneck drawin' cratur for a' that. It was easier, hooever, to get the slyness oot o' Jacob, than the dulness oot o' Esau. Punishment tellt upo' Jacob like upon a thin skinned horse, whauras Esau was mair like the minister's powny, that can hardly be made to unnerstan' that ye want him to gang on. But o' the ither han', dullness is a thing that can be borne wi': there's nay hurry aboot that; but the deceitfu' tricks o' Jacob war na to be endured, and sae the tawse (leather strap) cam doon upo' him."

"An' what for didna God mak Esau as clever as Jacob?" asked a wizened faced boy near the top of the class.

"Ah, my Peery!" said Mr Graham, "I canna tell ye that. A' that I can tell is, that God hadna dune makin' at him, an' some kin' o' fowk tak langer to mak oot than ithers. An' ye canna tell what they're to be till they're made oot. But whether what I tell ye be richt or no, God maun hae the verra best o' rizzons for 't, ower guid maybe for us to unnerstan'–the best o' rizzons for Esau himsel', I mean, for the Creator luiks efter his cratur first ava' (of all).—And now," concluded Mr Graham, resuming his English, "go to your lessons; and be diligent, that God may think it worth while to get on faster with the making of you."

In a moment the class was dispersed and all were seated. In another, the sound of scuffling arose, and fists were seen storming across a desk.

"Andrew Jamieson and Poochy, come up here," said the master in a loud voice.

"He hittit me first," cried Andrew, the moment they were within a respectful distance of the master, whereupon Mr Graham turned to the other with inquiry in his eyes.

"He had nae business to ca' me Poochy."

"No more he had; but you had just as little right to punish him for it. The offence was against me: he had no right to use my name for you, and the quarrel was mine. For the present you are Poochy no more: go to your place, William Wilson."

The boy burst out sobbing, and crept back to his seat with his knuckles in his eyes.

"Andrew Jamieson," the master went on, "I had almost got a name for you, but you have sent it away. You are not ready for it yet, I see. Go to your place."

With downcast looks Andrew followed William, and the watchful eyes of the master saw that, instead of quarrelling any more during the day, they seemed to catch at every opportunity of showing each other a kindness.

Mr Graham never used bodily punishment: he ruled chiefly by the aid of a system of individual titles, of the mingled characters of pet name and nickname. As soon as the individuality of a boy had attained to signs of blossoming—that is, had become such that he could predict not only an upright but a characteristic behaviour in given circumstances, he would take him aside and whisper in his ear that henceforth, so long as he deserved it, he would call him by a certain name—one generally derived from some object in the animal or vegetable world, and pointing to a resemblance which was not often patent to any eye but the master's own. He had given the name of Peachy, for instance to William Wilson, because, like the kangaroo, he sought his object in a succession of awkward, yet not the less availing leaps—gulping his knowledge and pocketing his conquered marble after a like fashion. Mappy, the name which thus belonged to a certain flaxen haired, soft eyed girl, corresponds to the English bunny. Sheltie is the small Scotch mountain pony, active and strong. Peery means pegtop. But not above a quarter of the children had pet names. To gain one was to reach the highest honour of the school; the withdrawal of it was the severest of punishments, and the restoring of it the sign of perfect reconciliation. The master permitted no one else to use it, and was seldom known to forget himself so far as to utter it while its owner was in disgrace. The hope of gaining such a name, or the fear of losing it, was in the pupil the strongest ally of the master, the most powerful enforcement of his influences. It was a scheme of government by aspiration. But it owed all its operative power to the character of the man who had adopted rather than invented it—for the scheme had been suggested by a certain passage in the book of the Revelation.

Without having read a word of Swedenborg, he was a believer in the absolute correspondence of the inward and outward; and, thus long before the younger Darwin arose, had suspected a close relationship—remote identity, indeed, in nature and history, between the animal and human worlds. But photographs from a good many different points would be necessary to afford anything like a complete notion of the character of this country schoolmaster.

Towards noon, while he was busy with an astronomical class, explaining, by means partly of the blackboard, partly of two boys representing the relation of the earth and the moon, how it comes that we see but one half of the latter, the door gently opened and the troubled face of the mad laird peeped slowly in. His body followed as gently, and at last—sad symbol of his weight of care —his hump appeared, with a slow half revolution as he turned to shut the door behind him. Taking off his hat, he walked up to Mr Graham, who, busy with his astronomy, had not perceived his entrance, touched him on the arm, and, standing on tiptoe, whispered softly in his ear, as if it were a painful secret that must be respected, "I dinna ken whaur I cam frae. I want to come to the school."

Mr Graham turned and shook hands with him, respectfully addressing him as Mr Stewart, and got down for him the armchair which stood behind his desk. But, with the politest bow, the laird declined it, and mournfully repeating the words, "I dinna ken whaur I cam frae," took a place readily yielded him in the astronomical circle surrounding the symbolic boys.

This was not by any means his first appearance there; for every now and then he was seized with a desire to go to school, plainly with the object of finding out where he came from. This always fell in his quieter times, and for days together he would attend regularly; in one instance he was not absent an hour for a whole month. He spoke so little, however, that it was impossible to tell how much

he understood, although he seemed to enjoy all that went on. He was so quiet, so sadly gentle, that he gave no trouble of any sort, and after the first few minutes of a fresh appearance, the attention of the scholars was rarely distracted by his presence.

The way in which the master treated him awoke like respect in his pupils. Boys and girls were equally ready t. make room for him on their forms, and any one of the latter who had by some kind attention awakened the watery glint of a smile on the melancholy features of the troubled man, would boast of her success. Hence it came that the neighbourhood of Portlossie was the one spot in the county where a person of weak intellect or peculiar appearance might go about free of insult.

The peculiar sentence the laird so often uttered was the only one he invariably spoke with definite clearness. In every other attempt at speech he was liable to be assailed by an often recurring impediment, during the continuance of which he could compass but a word here and there, often betaking himself in the agony of suppressed utterance, to the most extravagant gestures, with which he would sometimes succeed in so supplementing his words as to render his meaning intelligible.

The two boys representing the earth and the moon, had returned to their places in the class, and Mr Graham had gone on to give a description of the moon, in which he had necessarily mentioned the enormous height of her mountains as compared with those of the earth. But in the course of asking some questions, he found a need of further explanation, and therefore once more required the services of the boy sun and boy moon. The moment the latter, however, began to describe his circle around the former, Mr Stewart stepped gravely up to him, and, laying hold of his hand, led him back to his station in the class: then, turning first one shoulder, then the other to the company, so as to attract attention to his hump, uttered the single word Mountain, and took on himself the part of the moon, proceeding to revolve in the circle which represented her orbit. Several of the boys and girls smiled, but no one laughed, for Mr Graham's gravity maintained theirs. Without remark, he used the mad laird for a moon to the end of his explanation.

Mr Stewart remained in the school all the morning, stood up with every class Mr Graham taught, and in the intervals sat, with book or slate before him, still as a Brahmin on the fancied verge of his re-absorption, save that he murmured to himself now and then,

"I dinna ken whaur I cam frae."

When his pupils dispersed for dinner, Mr Graham invited him to go to his house and share his homely meal, but with polished gesture and broken speech, Mr Stewart declined, walked away towards the town, and was seen no more that afternoon.

# CHAPTER VIII: THE SWIVEL

Mrs Courthope, the housekeeper at Lossie House, was a good woman, who did not stand upon her dignities, as small rulers are apt to do, but cultivated friendly relations with the people of the Sea Town. Some of the rougher of the women despised the sweet outlandish speech she had brought with her from her native England, and accused her of mim mou'dness, or an affected modesty in the use of words; but not the less was she in their eyes a great lady,—whence indeed came the special pleasure in finding flaws in her—for to them she was the representative of the noble family on whose skirts they and their ancestors had been settled for ages, the last marquis not having visited the place for many years, and the present having but lately succeeded.

Duncan MacPhail was a favourite with her; for the English woman will generally prefer the highland to the lowland Scotsman; and she seldom visited the Seaton without looking in upon him so that when Malcolm returned from the Alton, or Old Town, where the school was, it did not in the least surprise him to find her seated with his grandfather.

Apparently, however, there had been some dissension between them; for the old man sat in his corner strangely wrathful, his face in a glow, his head thrown back, his nostrils distended, and his eyelids working, as if his eyes were "poor dumb mouths," like Caesar's wounds, trying to speak.

"We are told in the New Testament to forgive our enemies, you know," said Mrs Courthope, heedless of his entrance, but in a voice that seemed rather to plead than oppose.

"Inteet she will not be false to her shief and her clan," retorted Duncan persistently. "She will not forgife Cawmil of Glenlyon."

"But he's dead long since, and we may at least hope he repented and was forgiven."

"She'll be hoping nothing of the kind, Mistress Kertope," replied Duncan. "But if, as you say, God will be forgifing him, which I do not belief;—let that pe enough for ta greedy blackguard. Sure, it matters but small whether poor Tuncan MacPhail will be forgifing him or not. Anyhow, he must do without it, for he shall not haf it. He is a tamn fillain and scounrel, and so she says, with her respecs to you, Mistress Kertope."

His sightless eyes flashed with indignation; and perceiving it was time to change the subject, the housekeeper turned to Malcolm.

"Could you bring me a nice mackerel or whiting for my lord's breakfast tomorrow morning, Malcolm?" she said.

"Certaintly, mem. I s' be wi ye in guid time wi' the best the sea 'll gie me," he answered.

"If I have the fish by nine o'clock, that will be early enough," she returned.

"I wad na like to wait sae lang for my brakfast," remarked Malcolm.

"You wouldn't mind it much, if you waited asleep," said Mrs Courthope.

"Can onybody sleep till sic a time o' day as that?" exclaimed the youth.

"You must remember my lord doesn't go to bed for hours after you, Malcolm."

"An' what can keep him up a' that time? It's no as gien he war efter the herrin', an' had the win' an' the watter an' the netfu's o' waumlin craturs to baud him waukin'."

"Oh! he reads and writes, and sometimes goes walking about the grounds after everybody else is in bed," said Mrs Courthope, "he and his dog."

"Well, I wad rather be up ear'," said Malcolm; "a heap raither. I like fine to be oot i' the quaiet o' the mornin' afore the sun's up to set the din gaun; whan it 's a' clear but no bricht—like the back o' a bonny sawmon; an' air an' watter an' a' luiks as gien they war waitin' for something—quaiet, verra quaiet, but no content."

Malcolm uttered this long speech, and went on with more like it, in the hope of affording time for the stormy waters of Duncan's spirit to assuage. Nor was he disappointed; for, if there was a sound

on the earth Duncan loved to hear, it was the voice of his boy; and by degrees the tempest sank to repose, the gathered glooms melted from his countenance, and the sunlight of a smile broke out.

"Hear to him!" he cried. "Her poy will be a creat pard some tay, and sing pefore ta Stuart kings, when they come pack to Holyrood!"

Mrs Courthope had enough of poetry in her to be pleased with Malcolm's quiet enthusiasm, and spoke a kind word of sympathy with the old man's delight as she rose to take her leave. Duncan rose also, and followed her to the door, making her a courtly bow, and that just as she turned away.

"It 'll pe a coot 'oman, Mistress Kertope," he said as he came back; "and it 'll no pe to plame her for forgifing Glenlyon, for he did not kill her creat crandmother. Put it'll pe fery paad preeding to request her nainsel, Tuncan MacPhail, to be forgifing ta rascal. Only she'll pe put a voman, and it'll not pe knowing no petter to her.—You'll be minding you'll be firing ta cun at six o'clock exackly, Malcolm, for all she says; for my lord peing put shust come home to his property, it might be a fex to him if tere was any mistake so soon. Put inteed, I yonder he hasn't been sending for old Tuncan to be gifing him a song or two on ta peeps; for he'll pe hafing ta oceans of fery coot highland plood in his own feins; and his friend, ta Prince of Wales, who has no more rights to it than a maackerel fish, will pe wearing ta kilts at Holyrood. So mind you pe firing ta cun at sax, my son."

For some years, young as he was, Malcolm had hired himself to one or other of the boat proprietors of the Seaton or of Scaurnose, for the herring fishing—only, however, in the immediate neighbourhood, refusing to go to the western islands, or any station whence he could not return to sleep at his grandfather's cottage. He had thus on every occasion earned enough to provide for the following winter, so that his grandfather's little income as piper, and other small returns, were accumulating in various concealments about the cottage; for, in his care for the future, Duncan dreaded lest Malcolm should buy things for him, without which, in his own sightless judgment, he could do well enough.

Until the herring season should arrive, however, Malcolm made a little money by line fishing; for he had bargained, the year before, with the captain of a schooner for an old ship's boat, and had patched and caulked it into a sufficiently serviceable condition. He sold his fish in the town and immediate neighbourhood, where a good many housekeepers favoured the handsome and cheery young fisherman.

He would now be often out in the bay long before it was time to call his grandfather, in his turn to rouse the sleepers of Portlossie. But the old man had as yet always waked about the right time, and the inhabitants had never had any ground of complaint—a few minutes one way or the other being of little consequence. He was the cock which woke the whole yard: morning after morning his pipes went crowing through the streets of the upper region, his music ending always with his round. But after the institution of the gun signal, his custom was to go on playing where he stood until he heard it, or to stop short in the midst of his round and his liveliest reveille the moment it reached his ear. Loath as he might be to give over, that sense of good manners which was supreme in every highlander of the old time, interdicted the fingering of a note after the marquis's gun had called aloud.

When Malcolm meant to go fishing, he always loaded the swivel the night before, and about sunset the same evening he set out for that purpose. Not a creature was visible on the border of the curving bay except a few boys far off on the gleaming sands whence the tide had just receded: they were digging for sand eels—lovely little silvery fishes—which, as every now and then the spade turned one or two up, they threw into a tin pail for bait. But on the summit of the long sandhill, the lonely figure of a man was walking to and fro in the level light of the rosy west; and as Malcolm climbed the near end of the dune, it was turning far off at the other: halfway between them was the embrasure with the brass swivel, and there they met. Although he had never seen him before, Malcolm perceived at once it must be Lord Lossie, and lifted his bonnet. The marquis nodded and passed on, but the next moment, hearing the noise of Malcolm's proceedings with the swivel, turned and said—"What are you about there with that gun, my lad?"

" jist ga'in' to dicht her oot an' lod her, my lord," answered Malcolm.

"And what next? You're not going to fire the thing?"

"Ay—the morn's mornin', my lord."

"What will that be for?"

"Ow, jist to wauk yer lordship."

"Hm!" said his lordship, with more expression than articulation.

"Will I no lod her?" asked Malcolm, throwing down the ramrod, and approaching the swivel, as if to turn the muzzle of it again into the embrasure.

"Oh, yes! load her by all means. I don't want to interfere with any of your customs. But if that is your object, the means, I fear, are inadequate."

"It's a comfort to hear that, my lord; for I canna aye be sure o' my auld watch, an' may weel be oot a five minutes or twa whiles. Sae, in future, seem' it 's o' sic sma' consequence to yer lordship, I s' jist let her aff whan it 's convenient. A feow minutes winna maitter muckle to the bailie bodies."

There was something in Malcolm's address that pleased Lord Lossie—the mingling of respect and humour, probably—the frankness and composure, perhaps. He was not self conscious enough to be shy, and was so free from design of any sort that he doubted the good will of no one.

"What's your name?" asked the marquis abruptly.

"Malcolm MacPhail, my lord."

"MacPhail? I heard the name this very day! Let me see."

"My gran'father's the blin' piper, my lord."

"Yes, yes. Tell him I shall want him at the House. I left my own piper at Ceanglas."

"I'll fess him wi' me the morn, gien ye like, my lord, for I'll be ower wi' some fine troot or ither, gien I haena the waur luck, the morn's mornin': Mistress Courthope says she'll be aye ready for ane to fry to yer lordship's brakfast. But thinkin' that'll be ower ear' for ye to see him."

"I'll send for him when I want him. Go on with your brazen serpent there, only mind you don't give her too much supper."

"Jist look at her ribs, my lord! she winna rive!" was the youth's response; and the marquis was moving off with a smile, when Malcolm called after him.

"Gien yer lordship likes to see yer ain ferlies, I ken whaur some o' them lie," he said.

"What do you mean by ferlies?" asked the marquis.

"Ow! keeriosities, ye ken. For enstance, there's some queer caves alang the cost—twa or three o' them afore ye come to the Scaurnose. They say the water bude till ha' howkit them ance upon a time, an' they maun hae been fu' o' partans, an' lobsters, an' their frien's an' neebours; but they're heigh an' dreigh noo, as the fule said o' his minister, an' naething intill them but foumarts, an' otters, an' sic like."

"Well, well, my lad, we'll see," said his lordship kindly and turning once more, he resumed his walk.

"At yer lordship's will," answered Malcolm in a low voice as he lifted his bonnet and again bent to the swivel.

The next morning, he was rowing slowly along in the bay, when he was startled by the sound of his grandfather's pipes, wafted clear and shrill on a breath of southern wind, from the top of the town. He looked at his watch: it was not yet five o'clock. The expectation of a summons to play at Lossie House, had so excited the old man's brain that he had waked long before his usual time, and Portlossie must wake also. The worst of it was, that he had already, as Malcolm knew from the direction of the sound, almost reached the end of his beat, and must even now be expecting the report of the swivel, until he heard which he would not cease playing, so long as there was a breath in his body. Pulling, therefore, with all his might, Malcolm soon ran his boat ashore, and in another instant the sharp yell of the swivel rang among the rocks of the promontory. He was still standing, lapped in a light reverie as he watched the smoke flying seaward, when a voice, already well known to him said, close at his side:

"What are you about with that horrid cannon?"

Malcolm started.

"Ye garred me loup, my leddy!" he returned with a smile and an obeisance.

"You told me," the girl went on emphatically, and as she spoke she disengaged her watch from her girdle, "that you fired it at six o'clock. It is not nearly six."

"Didna ye hear the pipes, my leddy?" he rejoined.

"Yes, well enough; but a whole regiment of pipes can't make it six o'clock when my watch says ten minutes past five."

"Eh, sic a braw watch!" exclaimed Malcolm. "What's a' thae bonny white k-nots about the face o' 't?"

"Pearls," she answered, in a tone that implied pity of his ignorance.

"Jist look at it aside mine!" he exclaimed in admiration, pulling out his great old turnip.

"There!" cried the girl; "your own watch says only a quarter past five."

"Ow, ay! my leddy; I set it by the toon clock 'at hings i' the window o' the Lossie Airms last nicht. But I maun awa' an' luik efter my lines, or atween the deil an' the dogfish my lord'll fare ill."

"You haven't told me why you fired the gun," she persisted.

Thus compelled, Malcolm had to explain that the motive lay in his anxiety lest his grandfather should over exert himself, seeing he was subject to severe attacks of asthma.

"He could stop when he was tired," she objected.

"Ay, gien his pride wad lat him," answered Malcolm, and turned away again, eager to draw his line.

"Have you a boat of your own?" asked the lady.

"Ay; yon's her, doon on the shore yonner. Wad ye like a row? She's fine an' quaiet."

"Who? The boat?"

"The sea, my leddy."

"Is your boat clean?"

"O' a' thing but fish. But na, it 's no fit for sic a bonny goon as that. I winna lat ye gang the day, my leddy; but gien ye like to be here the morn's mornin', I s' be here at this same hoor, an' hae my boat as clean's a Sunday sark."

"You think more of my gown than of myself," she returned.

"There's no fear o' yersel', my leddy. Ye're ower weel made to bland (spoil). But wae's me for the goon or (before) it had been an hoor i' the boat the day!—no to mention the fish comin' walopin' ower the gunnel ane efter the ither. But 'deed I maun say good mornin', mem!"

"By all means. I don't want to keep you a moment from your precious fish."

Feeling rebuked, without well knowing why, Malcolm accepted the dismissal, and ran to his boat. By the time he had taken his oars, the girl had vanished.

His line was a short one; but twice the number of fish he wanted were already hanging from the hooks. It was still very early when he reached the harbour. At home he found his grandfather waiting for him, and his breakfast ready.

It was hard to convince Duncan that he had waked the royal burgh a whole hour too soon. He insisted that, as he had never made such a blunder before, he could not have made it now.

"It's ta watch 'at 'll pe telling ta lies, Malcolm, my poy," he said thoughtfully. "She was once pefore."

"But the sun says the same 's the watch, daddy," persisted Malcolm.

Duncan understood the position of the sun and what it signified, as well as the clearest eyed man in Port Lossie, but he could not afford to yield.

"It was peing some conspeeracy of ta cursit Cawmills, to make her loss her poor pension," he said. "Put never you mind, Malcolm; I'll pe making up for ta plunder ta morrow mornin'. Ta coot peoples shall haf teir sleeps a whole hour after tey ought to be at teir works."

# CHAPTER IX: THE SALMON TROUT

Malcolm walked up through the town with his fish, hoping to part with some of the less desirable of them, and so lighten his basket, before entering the grounds of Lossie House. But he had met with little success, and was now approaching the town gate, as they called it, which closed a short street at right angles to the principal one, when he came upon Mrs Catanach—on her knees, cleaning her doorstep.

"Weel, Malcolm, what fish hae ye?" she said, without looking up.

"Hoo kent ye it was me, Mistress Catanach?" asked the lad.

"Kent it was you!" she repeated. "Gien there be but twa feet at ance in ony street o' Portlossie, I'll tell ye whase heid's abune them, an' my een steekit (closed)."

"Hoot! ye're a witch, Mistress Catanach!" said Malcolm merrily.

"That's as may be," she returned, rising, and nodding mysteriously; "I hae tauld ye nae mair nor the trowth. But what garred ye whup's a' oot o' oor nakit beds by five o'clock i' the mornin', this mornin', man! That's no what ye're paid for."

"Deed, mem, it was jist a mistak' o' my puir daddy's. He had been feart o' sleepin' ower lang, ye see, an' sae had waukit ower sune. I was oot efter the fish mysel."

"But ye fired the gun 'gen the chap (before the stroke) o' five."

"Ow, ay! I fired the gun. The puir man wod hae bursten himsel' gien I hadna."

"Deil gien he had bursten himsel'—the auld heelan' sholt!" exclaimed Mrs Catanach spitefully.

"Ye sanna even sic words to my gran'father, Mrs Catanach," said Malcolm with rebuke.

She laughed a strange laugh.

"Sanna!" she repeated contemptuously. "An' wha's your gran'father, that I sud tak tent (heed) hoo I wag my tongue ower his richtousness?"

Then, with a sudden change of her tone to one of would be friendliness—"But what'll ye be seekin' for that bit sawmon trooty, man?" she said.

As she spoke she approached his basket, and would have taken the fish in her hands, but Malcolm involuntarily drew back.

"It's gauin' to the Hoose to my lord's brakfast," he said.

"Hoots! ye'll jist lea' the troot wi' me.—Ye'll be seekin' a saxpence for 't, I reckon," she persisted, again approaching the basket.

"I tell ye, Mistress Catanach," said Malcolm, drawing back now in the fear that if she once had it she would not yield it again, "it 's gauin' up to the Hoose!"

"Hoots! there's naebody there seen 't yet. It's new oot o' the watter."

"But Mistress Courthope was doon last nicht, an' wantit the best I cud heuk."

"Mistress Courthope! Wha cares for her? A mim, cantin' auld body! Gie me the trootie, Ma'colm. Ye're a bonny laad, an 'it s' be the better for ye."

"Deed I cudna du 't, Mistress Catanach—though sorry to disobleege ye. It's bespoken, ye see. But there's a fine haddie, an' a bonny sma' coddie, an' a goukmey (gray gurnard)."

"Gae 'wa' wi' yer haddies, an' yer goukmeys! Ye sanna gowk me wi' them."

"Weel, I wadna wonner," said Malcolm, "gien Mrs Courthope wad like the haddie tu, an' maybe the lave o' them as weel. Hers is a muckle faimily to haud eatin.' I'll jist gang to the Hoose first afore I mak ony mair offers frae my creel."

"Ye'll lea' the troot wi' me," said Mrs Catanach imperiously.

"Na; I canna du that. Ye maun see yersel' 'at I canna."

The woman's face grew dark with anger. "It s' be the waur for ye," she cried.

" no gauin' to be fleyt (frightened) at ye. Ye're no sic a witch as that comes till, though ye div ken a body's fit upo' the flags! My blin' luckie deddy can du mair nor that!" said Malcolm, irritated by her persistency, threats and evil looks.

"Daur ye me?"' she returned, her pasty cheeks now red as fire, and her wicked eyes flashing as she shook her clenched fist at him.

"What for no?" he answered coolly, turning his head back over his shoulder, for he was already on his way to the gate.

"Ye s' ken that, ye misbegotten funlin'!" shrieked the woman, and waddled hastily into the house.

"What ails her?" said Malcolm to himself. "She micht ha' seen 'at I bude to gie Mrs Courthope the first offer."

By a winding carriage drive, through trees whose growth was stunted by the sea winds, which had cut off their tops as with a keen razor, Malcolm made a slow descent, yet was soon shadowed by timber of a more prosperous growth, rising as from a lake of the loveliest green, spangled with starry daisies. The air was full of sweet odours uplifted with the ascending dew, and trembled with a hundred songs at once, for here was a very paradise for birds. At length he came in sight of a long low wing of the house, and went to the door that led to the kitchen. There a maid informed him that Mrs Courthope was in the hall, and he had better take his basket there, for she wanted to see him. He obeyed, and sought the main entrance.

The house was an ancient pile, mainly of two sides at right angles, but with many gables, mostly having corbel steps—a genuine old Scottish dwelling, small windowed and gray, with steep slated roofs, and many turrets, each with a conical top. Some of these turrets rose from the ground, encasing spiral stone stairs; others were but bartizans, their interiors forming recesses in rooms. They gave the house something of the air of a French chateau, only it looked stronger and far grimmer. Carved around some of the windows, in ancient characters, were Scripture texts and antique proverbs. Two time worn specimens of heraldic zoology, in a state of fearful and everlasting excitement, stood rampant and gaping, one on each side of the hall door, contrasting strangely with the repose of the ancient house, which looked very like what the oldest part of it was said to have been—a monastery. It had at the same time, however, a somewhat warlike expression, wherein consisting it would have been difficult to say; nor could it ever have been capable of much defence, although its position in that regard was splendid. In front was a great gravel space, in the centre of which lay a huge block of serpentine, from a quarry on the estate, filling the office of goal, being the pivot, as it were, around which all carriages turned.

On one side of the house was a great stone bridge, of lofty span, stretching across a little glen, in which ran a brown stream spotted with foam—the same that entered the frith beside the Seaton; not muddy, however, for though dark it was clear—its brown being a rich transparent hue, almost red, gathered from the peat bogs of the great moorland hill behind. Only a very narrow terrace walk, with battlemented parapet, lay between the back of the house, and a precipitous descent of a hundred feet to this rivulet. Up its banks, lovely with flowers and rich with shrubs and trees below, you might ascend until by slow gradations you left the woods and all culture behind, and found yourself, though still within the precincts of Lossie House, on the lonely side of the waste hill, a thousand feet above the sea.

The hall door stood open, and just within hovered Mrs Courthope, dusting certain precious things not to be handled by a housemaid. This portion of the building was so narrow that the hall occupied its entire width, and on the opposite side of it another door, standing also open, gave a glimpse of the glen.

"Good morning, Malcolm," said Mrs Courthope, when she turned and saw whose shadow fell on the marble floor. "What have you brought me?"

"A fine salmon troot, mem. But gien ye had hard boo Mistress Catanach flytit (scolded) at me 'cause I wadna gie't to her! You wad hae thocht, mem, she was something no canny—the w'y 'at she first beggit, an' syne fleecht (flattered), an syne a' but banned an' swore."

"She's a peculiar person, that, Malcolm. Those are nice whitings. I don't care about the trout. Just take it to her as you go back."

"I doobt gien she'll take it, mem. She's an awfu' vengefu' cratur, fowk says."

"You remind me, Malcolm," returned Mrs Courthope, "that not at ease about your grandfather. He is not in a Christian frame of mind at all—and he is an old man too. If we don't forgive our enemies, you know, the Bible plainly tells us we shall not be forgiven ourselves."

" thinkin' it was a greater nor the Bible said that, mem," returned Malcolm, who was an apt pupil of Mr Graham. "But ye'll be meanin' Cawmill o' Glenlyon," he went on with a smile. "It canna maitter muckle to him whether my gran'father forgie him or no, seein' he's been deid this hunner year."

"It's not Campbell of Glenlyon, it 's your grandfather I am anxious about," said Mrs Courthope. "Nor is it only Campbell of Glenlyon he's so fierce against, but all his posterity as well."

"They dinna exist, mem. There's no sic a bein' o' the face o' the yearth, as a descendant o' that Glenlyon."

"It makes little difference, I fear," said Mrs Courthope, who was no bad logician. "The question isn't whether or not there's anybody to forgive, but whether Duncan MacPhail is willing to forgive."

"That I do believe he is, mem; though he wad be as sair astonished to hear 't as ye are yersel'."

"I don't know what you mean by that, Malcolm."

"I mean, mem, 'at a blin' man, like my gran'father, canna ken himsel' richt, seein' he canna ken ither fowk richt. It's by kennin' ither fowk 'at ye come to ken yersel, mem—isna't noo?"

"Blindness surely doesn't prevent a man from knowing other people. He hears them, and he feels them, and indeed has generally more kindness from them because of his affliction."

"Frae some o' them, mem; but it 's little kin'ness my gran'father has expairienced frae Cawmill o' Glenlyon, mem."

"And just as little injury, I should suppose," said Mrs Courthope.

"Ye're wrang there, mem: a murdered mither maun be an unco skaith to oye's oye (grandson's grandson). But supposin' ye to be richt, what I say's to the pint for a' that I maun jist explain a wee.—When I was a laddie at the schule, I was ance tell't that ane o' the loons was i' the wye o' mockin' my gran'father. Whan I hard it, I thocht I cud jist rive the hert o' 'im, an' set my teeth in't, as the Dutch sodger did to the Spainiard. But whan I got a grip o' 'im, an' the rascal turned up a frichtit kin' o' a dog-like face to me, I jist could not drive my steikit neive (clenched fist) intil't. Mem, a face is an awfu' thing! There's aye something luikin' oot o' 't 'at ye canna do as ye like wi'. But my gran'father never saw a face in's life—lat alane Glenlyon's 'at's been dirt for sae mony a year. Gien he war luikin' intil the face o' that Glenlyon even, I do believe he wad no more drive his durk intill him."

"Drive his dirk into him!" echoed Mrs Courthope, in horror at the very disclaimer.

"No, sure he wad not," persisted Malcolm, innocently. "He micht not tak him oot o' a pot (hole in a riverbed), but he wad neither durk him nor fling him in. no that sure he wadna even ran (reach) him a han'. Ae thing I am certain o',—that by the time he meets Glenlyon in haven, he'll be no that far frae lattin' byganes be byganes."

"Meets Glenlyon in heaven!" again echoed Mrs Courthope, who knew enough of the story to be startled at the taken for granted way in which Malcolm spoke. "Is it probable that a wretch such as your legends describe him should ever get there?"

"Ye dinna think God's forgien him, than, mem?"

"I have no right to judge Glenlyon, or any other man; but, as you ask me, I must say I see no likelihood of it."

"Hoo can ye compleen o' my puir blin' grandfather for no forgiein' him, than?—I hae ye there, mem!"

"He may have repented, you know," said Mrs Courthope feebly, finding herself in less room than was comfortable.

"In sic case," returned Malcolm, "the auld man 'ill hear a' aboot it the meenit he wins there; an' I mak nae doobt he'll du his best to perswaud himsel'."

"But what if he shouldn't get there?" persisted Mrs Courthope, in pure benevolence.

"Hoot toot, mem! I wonner to hear ye! A Cawmill latten in, and my gran'father hauden oot! That wad be jist yallow faced Willie ower again![1]—Na, na; things gang anither gait up there. My gran'father's a rale guid man, for a' 'at he has a wye o' luikin' at things 'at's mair efter the law nor the gospel."

Apparently Mrs Courthope had come at length to the conclusion that Malcolm was as much of a heathen as his grandfather, for in silence she chose her fish, in silence paid him his price, and then with only a sad Good day, turned and left him.

He would have gone back by the river side to the sea gate, but Mrs Courthope having waived her right to the fish in favour of Mrs Catanach, he felt bound to give her another chance, and so returned the way he had come.

"Here's yer troot, Mistress Cat'nach," he called aloud at her door, which generally stood a little ajar. "Ye s' hae't for the saxpence—an' a guid bargain tu, for ane o' sic dimensions!"

As he spoke, he held the fish in at the door, but his eyes were turned to the main street, whence the factor's gig was at the moment rounding the corner into that in which he stood; when suddenly the salmon trout was snatched from his hand, and flung so violently in his face, that he staggered back into the road: the factor had to pull sharply up to avoid driving over him. His rout rather than retreat was followed by a burst of insulting laughter, and at the same moment, out of the house rushed a large vile looking mongrel, with hair like an ill used doormat and an abbreviated nose, fresh from the ashpit, caught up the trout, and rushed with it towards the gate.

"That's richt, my bairn!" shouted Mrs Catanach to the brute as he ran: "tak it to Mrs Courthope. Tak it back wi' my compliments."

Amidst a burst of malign laughter she slammed her door, and from a window sideways watched the young fisherman.

As he stood looking after the dog in wrath and bewilderment, the factor, having recovered from the fit of merriment into which the sudden explosion of events had cast him, and succeeded in quieting his scared horse, said, slackening his reins to move on,

"You sell your fish too cheap, Malcolm."

"The deil's i' the tyke," rejoined Malcolm, and, seized at last by a sense of the ludicrousness of the whole affair, burst out laughing, and turned for the High Street. .

"Na, na, laddie; the deil's no awa' in sic a hurry: he bed (remained)," said a voice behind him.

Malcolm turned again and lifted his bonnet. It was Miss Horn, who had come up from the Seaton.

"Did ye see yon, mem?" he asked.

"Ay, weel that, as I cam up the brae. Dinna stan' there, laddie. The jaud 'll be watchin' ye like a cat watchin' a mouse. I ken her! She's a cat wuman, an' I canna bide her. She's no mowse (safe to touch). She's in secrets mair nor guid, I s' wad (wager). Come awa' wi' me; I want a bit fish. I can ill eat an' her lyin' deid I' the hoose—it winna gang ower; but I maun get some strength pitten intil me afore the berial. It's a God's mercy I wasna made wi' feelin's, or what wad hae come o' me! Whaur's the gude o' greetin? It's no worth the saut i' the watter o' 't, Ma'colm. It's an ill wardle, an micht be a bonny ane—gien't warna for ill men."

[1] Lord Stair, the prime mover in the Massacre of Glenco.

"'Deed, mem! thinkin' mair aboot ill women, at this prasent," said Malcolm. "Maybe there's no sic a thing, but yon's unco like ane. As bonny a sawmon troot 's ever ye saw, mem! It's a' cawpable o' to haud ohn cursed that foul tyke o' hers."

"Hoot, laddie! haud yer tongue."

"Ay will I. na gaun to du 't, ye ken. But sic a fine troot 's that—the verra ane ye wad hae likit, mem!"

"Never ye min' the troot. There's mair whaur that cam frae. What anger't her at ye?"

"Naething mair nor that I bude to gie Mistress Courthope the first wale (choice) o' my fish."

"The wuman's no worth yer notice, 'cep to haud oot o' her gait, laddie; an' that ye had better luik till, for she's no canny. Dinna ye anger her again gien ye can help it. She has an ill luik, an' I canna bide her.—Hae, there's yer siller. Jean, tak in this fish."

During the latter part of the conversation they had been standing at the door, while Miss Horn ferreted the needful pence from a pocket under her gown. She now entered, but as Malcolm waited for Jean to take the fish, she turned on the threshold, and said:

"Wad ye no like to see her, Ma'colm?—A guid frien' she was to you, sae lang's she was here," she added after a short pause.

The youth hesitated.

"I never saw a corp i' my life, mem, an' jist some feared," he said, after another brief silence.

"Hoot, laddie!" returned Miss Horn, in a somewhat offended tone.—"That'll be what comes o' haein' feelin's. A bonny corp 's the bonniest thing in creation,—an' that quaiet!—Eh! sic a heap o' them as there has been sin' Awbel," she went on—"an ilk ane them luikin, as gien there never had been anither but itsel'! Ye oucht to see a corp, Ma'colm. Ye'll hae't to du afore ye're ane yersel', an' ye'll never see a bonnier nor my Grizel."

"Be 't to yer wull, mem," said Malcolm resignedly.

At once she led the way, and he followed her in silence up the stair and into the dead chamber.

There on the white bed lay the long, black, misshapen thing she had called "the bit boxie:" and with a strange sinking at the heart, Malcolm approached it.

Miss Horn's hand came from behind him, and withdrew a covering; there lay a vision lovely indeed to behold!—a fixed evanescence—a listening stillness,—awful, yet with a look of entreaty, at once resigned and unyielding, that strangely drew the heart of Malcolm. He saw a low white forehead, large eyeballs upheaving closed lids, finely modelled features of which the tightened skin showed all the delicacy, and a mouth of suffering whereon the vanishing Psyche had left the shadow of the smile with which she awoke. The tears gathered in his eyes, and Miss Horn saw them.

"Ye maun lay yer han' upo' her, Ma'colm," she said. "Ye ma' aye touch the deid, to hand ye ohn dreamed aboot them."

"I wad be laith," answered Malcolm; "she wad be ower bonny a dream to miss.—Are they a' like that?" he added, speaking under his breath.

"Na, 'deed no!" replied Miss Horn, with mild indignation. "Wad ye expec' Bawby Cat'nach to luik like that, no?—I beg yer pardon for mentionin' the wuman, my dear," she added with sudden divergence, bending towards the still face, and speaking in a tenderly apologetic tone; "I ken weel ye canna bide the verra name o' her; but it s' be the last time ye s' hear 't to a' eternity, my doo." Then turning again to Malcolm.—"Lay yer han' upon her broo, I tell ye," she said.

"I daurna," replied the youth, still under his breath; "my han's are no clean. I wadna for the warl' touch her wi' fishy han's."

The same moment, moved by a sudden impulse, whose irresistibleness was veiled in his unconsciousness, he bent down, and put his lips to the forehead.

As suddenly he started back erect with dismay on every feature.

"Eh, mem!" he cried in an agonised whisper, "she's dooms cauld!"

"What sud she be?" retorted Miss Horn. "Wad ye hae her beeried warm?"

He followed her from the room in silence, with the sense of a faint sting on his lips. She led him into her parlour, and gave him a glass of wine.

"Ye'll come to the beerial upo' Setterday?" she asked, half inviting, half enquiring.

" sorry to say, mem, 'at I canna," he answered. "I promised Maister Graham to tak the schule for him, an' lat him gang."

"Weel, weel! Mr Graham's obleeged to ye, nae doobt, an' we canna help it. Gie my compliments to yer gran'father."

"I'll du that, mem. He'll be sair pleased, for he's unco gratefu' for ony sic attention," said Malcolm, and with the words took his leave.

# CHAPTER X: THE FUNERAL

That night the weather changed, and grew cloudy and cold. Saturday morning broke drizzly and dismal. A northeast wind tore off the tops of the drearily tossing billows. All was gray—enduring, hopeless gray. Along the coast the waves kept roaring on the sands, persistent and fateful; the Scaurnose was one mass of foaming white: and in the caves still haunted by the tide, the bellowing was like that of thunder.

Through the drizzle shot wind and the fog blown in shreds from the sea, a large number of the most respectable of the male population of the burgh, clothed in Sunday gloom deepened by the crape on their hats, made their way to Miss Horn's, for, despite her rough manners, she was held in high repute. It was only such as had reason to dread the secret communication between closet and housetop that feared her tongue; if she spoke loud, she never spoke false, or backbit in the dark. What chiefly conduced however to the respect in which she was held, was that she was one of their own people, her father having died minister of the parish some twenty years before.

Comparatively little was known of her deceased cousin, who had been much of an invalid, and had mostly kept to the house, but all had understood that Miss Horn was greatly attached to her; and it was for the sake of the living mainly that the dead was thus honoured.

As the prayer drew to a close, the sounds of trampling and scuffling feet bore witness that Watty Witherspail and his assistants were carrying the coffin down the stair. Soon the company rose to follow it, and trooping out, arranged themselves behind the hearse, which, horrid with nodding plumes and gold and black panelling, drew away from the door to make room for them.

Just as they were about to move off, to the amazement of the company and the few onlookers who, notwithstanding the weather, stood around to represent the commonalty, Miss Horn herself, solitary, in a long black cloak and somewhat awful bonnet, issued, and made her way through the mourners until she stood immediately behind the hearse, by the side of Mr Cairns, the parish minister. The next moment, Watty Witherspail, who had his station at the further side of the hearse, arriving somehow at a knowledge of the apparition, came round by the horses' heads, and with a look of positive alarm at the glaring infringement of time honoured customs, addressed her in half whispered tones expostulatory:

"Ye'll never be thinkin' o' gauin' yersel', mem!" he said.

"What for no, Watty, I wad like to ken," growled Miss Horn from the vaulted depths of her bonnet.

"The like was never hard tell o'!" returned Watty, with the dismay of an orthodox undertaker, righteously jealous of all innovation.

"It'll be to tell o' hencefurth," rejoined Miss Horn, who in her risen anger spoke aloud, caring nothing who heard her. "Daur ye preshume, Watty Witherspaill," she went on, "for no rizzon but that I ga'e you the job, an' unnertook to pay ye for't—an' that far abune its market value,—daur ye preshume, I say, to dictate to me what to du an' what no to du anent the maitter in han'? Think ye I hae been a mither to the puir yoong thing for sae mony a year to lat her gang awa' her lane at the last wi' the likes o' you for company!"

"Hoot, mem! there's the minister at yer elbuck."

"I tell ye, ye're but a wheen rouch men fowk! There's no a wuman amon' ye to haud things dacent, 'cep I gang mysel'. no beggin' the minister's pardon ather. I'll gang. I maun see my puir Grizel till her last bed."

"I dread it may be too much for your feelings, Miss Horn," said the minister, who being an ambitious young man of lowly origin, and very shy of the ridiculous, did not in the least wish her company.

"Feelin's!" exclaimed Miss Horn, in a tone of indignant repudiation; " gauin' to du what's richt. I s' gang, and gien ye dinna like my company, Mr Cairns, ye can gang hame, an' I s' gang withoot ye. Gien she sud happen to be luikin doon, she sanna see me wantin' at the last o' her. But I s' mak' no wark aboot it. I s' no putt mysel' ower forret."

And. ere the minister could utter another syllable, she had left her place to go to the rear. The same instant the procession began to move, corpse marshalled, towards the grave; and stepping aside, she stood erect, sternly eyeing the irregular ranks of two and three and four as they passed her, intending to bring up the rear alone. But already there was one in that solitary position: with bowed head, Alexander Graham walked last and single. The moment he caught sight of Miss Horn, he perceived her design, and, lifting his hat, offered his arm. She took it almost eagerly, and together they followed in silence, through the gusty wind and monotonous drizzle.

The school house was close to the churchyard. An instant hush fell upon the scholars when the hearse darkened the windows, lasting while the horrible thing slowly turned to enter the iron gates, —a deep hush, as if a wave of the eternal silence which rounds all our noises had broken across its barriers. The mad laird, who had been present all the morning, trembled from head to foot; yet rose and went to the door with a look of strange, subdued eagerness. When Miss Horn and Mr Graham had passed into the churchyard, he followed.

With the bending of uncovered heads, in a final gaze of leave taking, over the coffin at rest in the bottom of the grave, all that belonged to the ceremony of burial was fulfilled; but the two facts that no one left the churchyard, although the wind blew and the rain fell, until the mound of sheltering earth was heaped high over the dead, and that the hands of many friends assisted with spade and shovel, did much to compensate for the lack of a service.

As soon as this labour was ended, Mr Graham again offered his arm to Miss Horn, who had stood in perfect calmness watching the whole with her eagle's eyes. But although she accepted his offer, instead of moving towards the gate, she kept her position in the attitude of a hostess who will follow her friends. They were the last to go from the churchyard. When they reached the schoolhouse she would have had Mr Graham leave her, but he insisted on seeing her home. Contrary to her habit she yielded, and they slowly followed the retiring company.

"Safe at last!" half sighed Miss Horn, as they entered the town—her sole remark on the way.

Rounding a corner, they came upon Mrs Catanach standing at a neighbour's door, gazing out upon nothing, as was her wont at times, but talking to some one in the house behind her. Miss Horn turned her head aside as she passed. A look of low, malicious, half triumphant cunning lightened across the puffy face of the howdy. She cocked one bushy eyebrow, setting one eye wide open, drew down the other eyebrow, nearly closing the eye under it, and stood looking after them until they were out of sight. Then turning her head over her shoulder, she burst into a laugh, softly husky with the general flabbiness of her corporeal conditions.

"What ails ye, Mistress Catanach?" cried a voice from within.

"Sic a couple 's yon twasum wad mak!" she replied, again bursting into gelatinous laughter.

"Wha, than? I canna lea' my milk parritch to come an' luik."

"Ow! jist Meg Horn, the auld kail runt, an' Sanny Graham, the stickit minister. I wad like weel to be at the beddin' o' them. Eh! the twa heids o' them upon ae bowster!"

And chuckling a low chuckle, Mrs Catanach moved for her own door.

As soon as the churchyard was clear of the funeral train, the mad laird peeped from behind a tall stone, gazed cautiously around him, and then with slow steps came and stood over the new made grave, where the sexton was now laying the turf, "to mak a' snod (trim) for the Sawbath."

"Whaur is she gane till?" he murmured to himself—He could generally speak better when merely uttering his thoughts without attempt at communication.—"I dinna ken whaur I cam frae, an' I dinna ken whaur she's gane till; but whan I gang mysel', maybe I'll ken baith.—I dinna ken, I dinna ken, I dinna ken whaur I cam frae."

Thus muttering, so lost in the thoughts that originated them that he spoke the words mechanically, he left the churchyard and returned to the school, where, under the superintendence of Malcolm, everything had been going on in the usual Saturday fashion—the work of the day which closed the week's labours, being to repeat a certain number of questions of the Shorter Catechism (which term, alas! included the answers), and next to buttress them with a number of suffering caryatids, as it were—texts of Scripture, I mean, first petrified and then dragged into the service. Before Mr Graham returned, every one had done his part except Sheltie, who, excellent at asking questions for himself, had a very poor memory for the answers to those of other people, and was in consequence often a keepie in. He did not generally heed it much, however, for the master was not angry with him on such occasions, and they gave him an opportunity of asking in his turn a multitude of questions of his own.

When he entered, he found Malcolm reading The Tempest and Sheltie sitting in the middle of the waste schoolroom, with his elbows on the desk before him, and his head and the Shorter Catechism between them; while in the farthest corner sat Mr Stewart, with his eyes fixed on the ground, murmuring his answerless questions to himself.

"Come up, Sheltie," said Mr Graham, anxious to let the boy go. "Which of the questions did you break down in today?"

"Please, sir, I cudna rest i' my grave till the resurrection," answered Sheltie, with but a dim sense of the humour involved in the reply.

"'What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?'" said Mr Graham, putting the question with a smile.

"'The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection,'" replied Sheltie, now with perfect accuracy; whereupon the master, fearing the outbreak of a torrent of counter questions, made haste to dismiss him.

"That'll do, Sheltie," he said. "Run home to your dinner."

Sheltie shot from the room like a shell from a mortar.

He had barely vanished when Mr Stewart rose and came slowly from his corner, his legs appearing to tremble under the weight of his hump, which moved fitfully up and down in his futile attempts to utter the word resurrection. As he advanced, he kept heaving one shoulder forward, as if he would fain bring his huge burden to the front, and hold it out in mute appeal to his instructor; but before reaching him he suddenly stopped, lay down on the floor on his back, and commenced rolling from side to side, with moans and complaints. Mr Graham interpreted the action into the question—How was such a body as his to rest in its grave till the resurrection—perched thus on its own back in the coffin? All the answer he could think of was to lay hold of his hand, lift him, and point upwards. The poor fellow shook his head, glanced over his shoulder at his hump, and murmured "Heavy, heavy!" seeming to imply that it would be hard for him to rise and ascend at the last day.

He had doubtless a dim notion that all his trouble had to do with his hump.

# CHAPTER XI: THE OLD CHURCH

The next day, the day of the Resurrection, rose glorious from its sepulchre of sea fog and drizzle. It had poured all night long, but at sunrise the clouds had broken and scattered, and the air was the purer for the cleansing rain, while the earth shone with that peculiar lustre which follows the weeping which has endured its appointed night. The larks were at it again, singing as if their hearts would break for joy as they hovered in brooding exultation over the song of the future; for their nests beneath hoarded a wealth of larks for summers to come. Especially about the old church—half buried in the ancient trees of Lossie House, the birds that day were jubilant; their throats seemed too narrow to let out the joyful air that filled all their hollow bones and quills: they sang as if they must sing, or choke with too much gladness. Beyond the short spire and its shining cock, rose the balls and stars and arrowy vanes of the House, glittering in gold and sunshine.

The inward hush of the Resurrection, broken only by the prophetic birds, the poets of the groaning and travailing creation, held time and space as in a trance; and the centre from which radiated both the hush and the carolling expectation seemed to Alexander Graham to be the churchyard in which he was now walking in the cool of the morning. It was more carefully kept than most Scottish churchyards, and yet was not too trim. Nature had a word in the affair—was allowed her part of mourning, in long grass and moss and the crumbling away of stone. The wholesomeness of decay, which both in nature and humanity is but the miry road back to life, was not unrecognized here; there was nothing of the hideous attempt to hide death in the garments of life. The master walked about gently, now stopping to read some well known inscription and ponder for a moment over the words; and now wandering across the stoneless mounds, content to be forgotten by all but those who loved the departed. At length he seated himself on a slab by the side of the mound that rose but yesterday: it was sculptured with symbols of decay—needless surely where the originals lay about the mouth of every newly opened grave, and as surely ill befitting the precincts of a church whose indwelling gospel is of life victorious over death!

"What are these stones," he said to himself, "but monuments to oblivion? They are not memorials of the dead, but memorials of the forgetfulness of the living. How vain it is to send a poor forsaken name, like the title page of a lost book, down the careless stream of time! Let me serve my generation, and let God remember me!"

The morning wore on; the sun rose higher and higher. He drew from his pocket the Nosce Teipsum. of Sir John Davies, and was still reading, in quiet enjoyment of the fine logic of the lawyer poet, when he heard the church key, in the trembling hand of Jonathan Auld, the sexton, jar feebly battling with the reluctant lock. Soon the people began to gather, mostly in groups and couples. At length came solitary Miss Horn, whom the neighbours, from respect to her sorrow, had left to walk alone. But Mr Graham went to meet her, and accompanied her into the church.

It was a cruciform building, as old as the vanished monastery, and the burial place of generations of noble blood; the dust of royalty even lay under its floor. A knight of stone reclined cross legged in a niche with an arched Norman canopy in one of the walls, the rest of which was nearly encased in large tablets of white marble, for at his foot lay the ashes of barons and earls whose title was extinct, and whose lands had been inherited by the family of Lossie. Inside as well as outside of the church the ground had risen with the dust of generations, so that the walls were low; and heavy galleries having been erected in parts, the place was filled with shadowy recesses and haunted with glooms. From a window in the square pew where he sat, so small and low that he had to bend his head to look out of it, the schoolmaster could see a rivulet of sunshine, streaming through between two upright gravestones, and glorifying the long grass of a neglected mound that lay close to the wall under the wintry drip from the eaves: when he raised his head, the church looked very dark. The best way there to preach the Resurrection, he thought, would be to contrast the sepulchral gloom of the church,

its dreary psalms and drearier sermons, with the sunlight on the graves, the lark filled sky, and the wind blowing where it listed. But although the minister was a young man of the commonest order, educated to the church that he might eat bread, hence a mere willing slave to the beck of his lord and master, the patron, and but a parrot in the pulpit, the schoolmaster not only endeavoured to pour his feelings and desires into the mould of his prayers, but listened to the sermon with a countenance that revealed no distaste for the weak and unsavoury broth ladled out him to nourish his soul withal. When however the service—though whose purposes the affair could be supposed to serve except those of Mr Cairns himself, would have been a curious question—was over, he did breathe a sigh of relief; and when he stepped out into the sun and wind which had been shining and blowing all the time of the dreary ceremony, he wondered whether the larks might not have had the best of it in the God praising that had been going on for two slow paced hours. Yet, having been so long used to the sort of thing, he did not mind it half so much as his friend Malcolm, who found the Sunday observances an unspeakable weariness to both flesh and spirit.

On the present occasion, however, Malcolm did not find the said observances dreary, for he observed nothing but the vision which radiated from the dusk of the small gallery forming Lossie pew, directly opposite the Norman canopy and stone crusader. Unconventional, careless girl as Lady Florimel had hitherto shown herself to him, he saw her sit that morning like the proudest of her race, alone, and, to all appearance, unaware of a single other person's being in the church besides herself. She manifested no interest in what was going on, nor indeed felt any—how could she? never parted her lips to sing; sat during the prayer; and throughout the sermon seemed to Malcolm not once to move her eyes from the carved crusader. When all was over, she still sat motionless—sat until the last old woman had hobbled out. Then she rose, walked slowly from the gloom of the church, flashed into the glow of the churchyard, gleamed across it to a private door in the wall, which a servant held for her, and vanished. If a moment after, the notes of a merry song invaded the ears of those who yet lingered, who could dare suspect that proudly sedate damsel thus suddenly breaking the ice of her public behaviour?

For a mere school girl she had certainly done the lady's part well. What she wore I do not exactly know; nor would it perhaps be well to describe what might seem grotesque to such prejudiced readers as have no judgment beyond the fashions of the day. But I will not let pass the opportunity of reminding them how sadly old fashioned we of the present hour also look in the eyes of those equally infallible judges who have been in dread procession towards us ever since we began to be—our posterity—judges who perhaps will doubt with a smile whether we even knew what love was, or ever had a dream of the grandeur they are on the point of grasping. But at least bethink yourselves, dear posterity: we have not ceased because you have begun.

Out of the church the blind Duncan strode with long, confident strides. He had no staff to aid him, for he never carried one when in his best clothes; but he leaned proudly on Malcolm's arm, if one who walked so erect could be said to lean. He had adorned his bonnet the autumn before with a sprig of the large purple heather, but every bell had fallen from it, leaving only the naked spray, pitiful analogue of the whole withered exterior of which it formed part. His sporran, however, hid the stained front of his kilt, and his Sunday coat had been new within ten years—the gift of certain ladies of Portlossie, some of whom, to whose lowland eyes the kilt was obnoxious, would have added a pair of trowsers, had not Miss Horn stoutly opposed them, confident that Duncan would regard the present as an insult. And she was right; for rather than wear anything instead of the philibeg, Duncan would have plaited himself one with his own blind fingers out of an old sack. Indeed, although the trews were never at any time unknown in the Highlands, Duncan had always regarded them as effeminate, and especially in his lowland exile would have looked upon the wearing of them as a disgrace to his highland birth.

"Tat wass a fery coot sairmon today, Malcolm," he said, as they stepped from the churchyard upon the road.

Malcolm, knowing well whither conversation on the subject would lead, made no reply. His grandfather, finding him silent, iterated his remark, with the addition—"Put how could it pe a paad one, you'll pe thinking, my poy, when he'd pe hafing such a text to keep him straight."

Malcolm continued silent, for a good many people were within hearing, whom he did not wish to see amused with the remarks certain to follow any he could make. But Mr Graham, who happened to be walking near the old man on the other side, out of pure politeness made a partial response.

"Yes, Mr MacPhail," he said, "it was a grand text."

"Yes, and it wass'll pe a cran' sairmon," persisted Duncan. "'Fenchence is mine—I will repay.' Ta Lord loves fenchence. It's a fine thing, fenchence. To make ta wicked know tat tey'll pe peing put men! Yes; ta Lord will slay ta wicked. Ta Lord will gif ta honest man fenchence upon his enemies. It wass a cran' sairmon!"

"Don't you think vengeance a very dreadful thing, Mr MacPhail?" said the schoolmaster.

"Yes, for ta von tat'll pe in ta wrong—I wish ta fenchence was mine!" he added with a loud sigh.

"But the Lord doesn't think any of us fit to be trusted with it, and so keeps it to himself, you see."

"Yes, and tat'll pe pecause it 'll pe too coot to be gifing to another. And some people would be waik of heart, and be letting teir enemies co."

"I suspect it 's for the opposite reason, Mr MacPhail:—we would go much too far, making no allowances, causing the innocent to suffer along with the guilty, neither giving fair play nor avoiding cruelty,—and indeed"

"No fear!" interrupted Duncan eagerly,—"no fear, when ta wrong wass as larch as Morven!"

In the sermon there had not been one word as to St Paul's design in quoting the text. It had been but a theatrical setting forth of the vengeance of God upon sin, illustrated with several common tales of the discovery of murder by strange means—a sermon after Duncan's own heart; and nothing but the way in which he now snuffed the wind with head thrown back and nostrils dilated, could have given an adequate idea of how much he enjoyed the recollection of it.

Mr Graham had for many years believed that he must have some personal wrongs to brood over,—wrongs, probably, to which were to be attributed his loneliness and exile; but of such Duncan had never spoken, uttering no maledictions except against the real or imagined foes of his family.[2]

The master placed so little value on any possible results of mere argument, and had indeed so little faith in any words except such as came hot from the heart, that he said no more, but, with an invitation to Malcolm to visit him in the evening, wished them good day, and turned in at his own door.

The two went slowly on towards the sea town. The road was speckled with home goers, single and in groups, holding a quiet Sunday pace to their dinners. Suddenly Duncan grasped Malcolm's arm with the energy of perturbation, almost of fright, and said in a loud whisper:

"Tere'll be something efil not far from her, Malcolm, my son! Look apout, look apout, and take care how you'll pe leading her."

Malcolm looked about, and replied, pressing Duncan's arm, and speaking in a low voice, far less audible than his whisper,

"There's naebody near, daddy—naebody but the howdie wife."

"What howdie wife do you mean, Malcolm?"

"Hoot! Mistress Catanach, ye ken. Dinna lat her hear ye."

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[2] What added to the likelihood of Mr Graham's conjecture was the fact, well enough known to him, though to few lowlanders besides, that revenge is not a characteristic of the Gael. Whatever instances of it may have appeared, and however strikingly they may have been worked up in fiction, such belong to the individual and not to the race. A remarkable proof of this occurs in the history of the family of Glenco itself. What remained of it after the massacre in 1689, rose in 1745, and joined the forces of Prince Charles Edward. Arriving in the neighbourhood of the residence of Lord Stair, whose grandfather had been one of the chief instigators of the massacre, the prince took special precautions lest the people of Glenco should wreak inherited vengeance on the earl. But they were so indignant at being supposed capable of visiting on the innocent the guilt of their ancestors, that it was with much difficulty they were prevented from forsaking the standard of the prince, and returning at once to their homes. Perhaps a yet stronger proof is the fact, fully asserted by one Gaelic scholar at least, that their literature contains nothing to foster feelings of revenge.

"I had a feeshion, Malcolm—one moment, and no more; ta darkness closed arount it: I saw a ped, Malcolm, and—"

"Wheesht, wheesht; daddy!" pleaded Malcolm importunately. "She hears ilka word ye're sayin'. She's awfu' gleg, and she's as poozhonous as an edder. Haud yer tongue, daddy; for guid sake haud yer tongue."

The old man yielded, grasping Malcolm's arm, and quickening his pace, though his breath came hard, as through the gathering folds of asthma. Mrs. Catanach also quickened her pace, and came gliding along the grass by the side of the road, noiseless as the adder to which Malcolm had likened her, and going much faster than she seemed. Her great round body looked a persistent type of her calling, and her arms seemed to rest in front of her as upon a ledge. In one hand she carried a small bible, round which was folded her pocket handkerchief, and in the other a bunch of southernwood and rosemary. She wore a black silk gown, a white shawl, and a great straw bonnet with yellow ribbons in huge bows, and looked the very pattern of Sunday respectability; but her black eyebrows gloomed ominous, and an evil smile shadowed about the corners of her mouth as she passed without turning her head or taking the least notice of them. Duncan shuddered, and breathed yet harder, but seemed to recover as she increased the distance between them. They walked the rest of the way in silence, however; and even after they reached home, Duncan made no allusion to his late discomposure.

"What was't ye thocht ye saw, as we cam frae the kirk, daddy?" asked Malcolm when they were seated at their dinner of broiled mackerel and boiled potatoes.

"In other times she'll pe hafing such feeshions often, Malcolm, my son," he returned, avoiding an answer. "Like other pards of her race she would pe seeing—in the speerit, where old Tuncan can see. And she'll pe telling you, Malcolm—peware of tat voman; for ta voman was thinking pad thoughts; and tat will pe what make her shutter and shake, my son, as she'll pe coing py."

# CHAPTER XII: THE CHURCHYARD

On Sundays, Malcolm was always more or less annoyed by the obtrusive presence of his arms and legs, accompanied by a vague feeling that, at any moment, and no warning given, they might, with some insane and irrepressible flourish, break the Sabbath on their own account, and degrade him in the eyes of his fellow townsmen, who seemed all silently watching how he bore the restraints of the holy day. It must be conceded, however, that the discomfort had quite as much to do with his Sunday clothes as with the Sabbath day, and that it interfered but little with an altogether peculiar calm which appeared to him to belong in its own right to the Sunday, whether its light flowed in the sunny cataracts of June, or oozed through the spongy clouds of November. As he walked again to the Alton, or Old Town in the evening, the filmy floats of white in the lofty blue, the droop of the long dark grass by the side of the short brown corn, the shadows pointing like all lengthening shadows towards the quarter of hope, the yellow glory filling the air and paling the green below, the unseen larks hanging aloft—like air pitcher plants that overflowed in song—like electric jars emptying themselves of the sweet thunder of bliss in the flashing of wings and the trembling of melodious throats; these were indeed of the summer but the cup of rest had been poured out upon them; the Sabbath brooded like an embodied peace over the earth, and under its wings they grew sevenfold peaceful—with a peace that might be felt, like the hand of a mother pressed upon the half sleeping child. The rusted iron cross on the eastern gable of the old church stood glowing lustreless in the westering sun; while the gilded vane, whose business was the wind, creaked radiantly this way and that, in the flaws from the region of the sunset: its shadow flickered soft on the new grave, where the grass of the wounded sod was drooping. Again seated on a neighbour stone, Malcolm found his friend.

"See," said the schoolmaster as the fisherman sat down beside him, "how the shadow from one grave stretches like an arm to embrace another! In this light the churchyard seems the very birthplace of shadows: see them flowing out of the tombs as from fountains, to overflow the world! Does the morning or the evening light suit such a place best, Malcolm?"

The pupil thought for a while.

"The evenin' licht, sir," he answered at length; "for ye see the sun's deem' like, an' deith's like a fa'in asleep, an' the grave's the bed, an' the sod's the bedclaes, an' there's a lang nicht to the fore."

"Are ye sure o' that, Malcolm?"

"It's the wye folk thinks an' says aboot it, sir."

"Or maybe doesna think, an' only says?"

"Maybe, sir; I dinna ken."

"Come here, Malcolm," said Mr Graham, and took him by the arm, and led him towards the east end of the church, where a few tombstones were crowded against the wall, as if they would press close to a place they might not enter.

"Read that," he said, pointing to a flat stone, where every hollow letter was shown in high relief by the growth in it of a lovely moss. The rest of the stone was rich in gray and green and brown lichens, but only in the letters grew the bright moss; the inscription stood as it were in the hand of nature herself—"He is not here; he is risen."

While Malcolm gazed, trying to think what his master would have him think, the latter resumed.

"If he is risen—if the sun is up, Malcolm—then the morning and not the evening is the season for the place of tombs; the morning when the shadows are shortening and separating, not the evening when they are growing all into one. I used to love the churchyard best in the evening, when the past was more to me than the future; now I visit it almost every bright summer morning, and only occasionally at night."

"But, sir, isna deith a dreidfu' thing?" said Malcolm.

"That depends on whether a man regards it as his fate, or as the will of a perfect God. Its obscurity is its dread; but if God be light, then death itself must be full of splendour—a splendour probably too keen for our eyes to receive."

"But there's the deein' itsel': isna that fearsome? It's that I wad be fleyed at."

"I don't see why it should be. It's the want of a God that makes it dreadful, and you will be greatly to blame, Malcolm, if you haven't found your God by the time you have to die."

They were startled by a gruff voice near them. The speaker was. hidden by a corner of the church.

"Ay, she's weel happit (covered)," it said. "But a grave never luiks richt wantin' a stane, an' her auld cousin wad hear o' nane bein' laid ower her. I said it micht be set up at her heid, whaur she wad never fin' the weicht o' 't; but na, na! nane o' 't for her! She's ane 'at maun tak her ain gait, say the ither thing wha likes."

It was Wattie Witherspail who spoke—a thin shaving of a man, with a deep, harsh, indeed startling voice.

"An' what ailed her at a stane?" returned the voice of Jonathan Auldbuird, the sexton. "—Nae doobt it wad be the expense?"

"Amna I tellin' ye what it was? Deil a bit o' the expense cam intil the calcalation! The auld maiden's nane sae close as fowk 'at disna ken her wad mak her oot. I ken her weel. She wadna hae a stane laid upon her as gien she wanted to hand her doon, puir thing! She said, says she, 'The yerd's eneuch upo' the tap o' her, wantin' that!'"

"It micht be some sair, she wad be thinkin' doobtless, for sic a waik worn cratur to lift whan the trump was blawn," said the sexton, with the feeble laugh of one who doubts the reception of his wit.

"Weel, I div whiles think," responded Wattie,—but it was impossible from his tone to tell whether or not he spoke in earnest,—"'at maybe my boxies is a wheen ower weel made for the use they're pitten till. They sudna be that ill to rive—gien a' be true 'at the minister says. Ye see, we dinna ken whan that day may come, an' there may na be time for the wat an' the worm to ca (drive) the boords apairt."

"Hoots, man! it 's no your lang nails nor yet yer heidit screws 'll haud doon the redeemt, gien the jeedgement war the morn's mornin'," said the sexton; "an' for the lave, they wad be glaid eneuch to bide whaur they are; but they'll a' be howkit oot,—fear na ye that."

"The Lord grant a blessed uprisin' to you an' me, Jonathan, at that day!" said Wattie, in the tone of one who felt himself uttering a more than ordinarily religious sentiment and on the word followed the sound of their retreating footsteps.

"How closely together may come the solemn and the grotesque! the ludicrous and the majestic!" said the schoolmaster. "Here, to us lingering in awe about the doors beyond which lie the gulfs of the unknown—to our very side come the wright and the grave digger with their talk of the strength of coffins and the judgment of the living God!"

"I hae whiles thoucht mysel', sir," said Malcolm, "it was gey strange like to hae a wuman o' the mak o' Mistress Catanach sittin' at the receipt o' bairns, like the gatekeeper o' the ither wan', wi' the hasp o' 't in her han': it doesna promise ower weel for them 'at she lats in. An' noo ye hae pitten't intil my heid that there's Wattie Witherspail an' Jonathan Auldbuird for the porters to open an' lat a' that's left o' 's oot again! Think o' sic like haein' sic a han' in sic solemn maitters!"

"Indeed some of us have strange porters," said Mr Graham, with a smile, "both to open to us and to close behind us! yet even in them lies the human nature, which, itself the embodiment of the unknown, wanders out through the gates of mystery, to wander back, it may be, in a manner not altogether unlike that by which it came."

In contemplative moods, the schoolmaster spoke in a calm and loftily sustained style of book English—quite another language from that he used when he sought to rouse the consciences of his pupils, and strangely contrasted with that in which Malcolm kept up his side of the dialogue.

"I houp, sir," said the latter, "it'll be nae sort o' a celestial Mistress Catanach 'at 'll be waiting for me o' the ither side; nor yet for my puir daddy, wha cud ill bide bein' wamled aboot upo' her knee."

Mr Graham laughed outright.

"If there be one to act the nurse," he answered, "I presume there will be one to take the mother's part too."

"But speakin' o' the grave, sir," pursued Malcolm, "I wiss ye cud drop a word 'at micht be o' some comfort to my daddy. It's plain to me, frae words he lats fa' noo an' than, that, instead o' lea'in' the warl' ahint him whan he dees, he thinks to lie smorin' an' smocherin' i' the mools, clammy an' weet, but a' there, an' trimlin' at the thocht o' the suddent awfu' roar an' din o' the brazen trumpet o' the archangel. I wiss ye wad luik in an' say something till him some nicht. It's nae guid mentionin' 't to the minister; he wad only gie a lauch an' gang awa'. An' gien ye cud jist slide in a word aboot forgiein' his enemies, sir! I made licht o' the maitter to Mistress Courthope, 'cause she only maks him waur. She does weel wi' what the minister pits intill her, but she has little o' her ain to mix't up wi', an' sae has but sma' weicht wi' the likes o' my gran'father. Only ye winna lat him think ye called on purpose."

They walked about the churchyard until the sun went down in what Mr Graham called the grave of his endless resurrection—the clouds on the one side bearing all the pomp of his funeral, the clouds on the other all the glory of his uprising; and when now the twilight trembled filmy on the borders of the dark, the master once more seated himself beside the new grave, and motioned to Malcolm to take his place beside him: there they talked and dreamed together of the life to come, with many wanderings and returns; and little as the boy knew of the ocean depths of sorrowful experience in the bosom of his companion whence floated up the breaking bubbles of rainbow hued thought, his words fell upon his heart—not to be provender for the birds of flitting fancy and airy speculation, but the seed—it might be decades ere it ripened—of a coming harvest of hope. At length the master rose and said, "Malcolm, going in: I should like you to stay here half an hour alone, and then go straight home to bed."

For the master believed in solitude and silence. Say rather, he believed in God. What the youth might think, feel, or judge, he could not tell; but he believed that when the Human is still, the Divine speaks to it, because it is its own.

Malcolm consented willingly. The darkness had deepened, the graves all but vanished; an old setting moon appeared, boatlike over a great cloudy chasm, into which it slowly sank; blocks of cloud, with stars between, possessed the sky; all nature seemed thinking about death; a listless wind began to blow, and Malcolm began to feel as if he were awake too long, and ought to be asleep—as if he were out in a dream—a dead man that had risen too soon or lingered too late—so lonely, so forsaken! The wind, soft as it was, seemed to blow through his very soul. Yet something held him, and his half hour was long over when he left the churchyard.

As he walked home, the words of a German poem, a version of which Mr Graham had often repeated to him, and once more that same night, kept ringing in his heart:

Uplifted is the stone,
And all mankind arisen!
We men remain thine own,
And vanished is our prison!
What bitterest grief can stay
Before thy golden cup,
When earth and life give way,
And with our Lord we sup.

To the marriage Death doth call.
The maidens are not slack;

The lamps are burning all—
Of oil there is no lack.
Afar I hear the walking
Of thy great marriage throng
And hark! the stars are talking
With human tone and tongue!

Courage! for life is hasting
To endless life away;
The inner fire, unwasting,
Transfigures our dull clay
See the stars melting, sinking,
In life wine, golden bright
We, of the splendour drinking,
Shall grow to stars of light.

Lost, lost are all our losses;
Love set for ever free;
The full life heaves and tosses
Like an eternal sea!
One endless living story!
One poem spread abroad!
And the sun of all our glory
Is the countenance of God.

# CHAPTER XIII: THE MARQUIS OF LOSSIE

The next morning rose as lovely as if the mantle of the departing Resurrection day had fallen upon it. Malcolm rose with it, hastened to his boat, and pulled out into the bay for an hour or two's fishing. Nearly opposite the great conglomerate rock at the western end of the dune, called the Bored Craig (Perforated Crag) because of a large hole that went right through it, he began to draw in his line. Glancing shoreward as he leaned over the gunwale, he spied at the foot .of the rock, near the opening, a figure in white, seated, with bowed head. It was of course the mysterious lady, whom he had twice before seen thereabout at this unlikely if not untimely hour; but with yesterday fresh in his mind, how could he fail to see in her an angel of the resurrection waiting at the sepulchre to tell the glad news that the Lord was risen?

Many were the glances he cast shoreward as he rebaited his line, and, having thrown it again into the water, sat waiting until it should be time to fire the swivel. Still the lady sat on, in her whiteness a creature of the dawn, without even lifting her head. At length, having added a few more fishes to the little heap in the bottom of his boat, and finding his watch bear witness that the hour was at hand, he seated himself on his thwart, and rowed lustily to the shore, his bosom filled with the hope of yet another sight of the lovely face, and another hearing of the sweet English voice and speech. But the very first time he turned his head to look, he saw but the sloping foot of the rock sink bare into the shore. No white robed angel sat at the gate of the resurrection; no moving thing was visible on the far vacant sands. When he reached the top of the dune, there was no living creature beyond but a few sheep feeding on the thin grass. He fired the gun, rowed back to the Seaton, ate his breakfast, and set out to carry the best of his fish to the House.

The moment he turned the corner of her street, he saw Mrs Catanach standing on her threshold with her arms akimbo; although she was always tidy, and her house spotlessly trim, she yet seemed forever about the door, on the outlook at least, if not on the watch.

"What hae ye in yer bit basket the day, Ma'colm?" she said, with a peculiar smile, which was not sweet enough to restore vanished confidence.

"Naething guid for dogs," answered Malcolm, and was walking past.

But she made a step forward, and, with a laugh meant to indicate friendly amusement, said,

"Let's see what's intill't, ony gait (anyhow).—The doggie's awa on 's traivels the day."

"'Deed, Mistress Catanach," persisted Malcolm, "I canna say I like to hae my ain fish flung i' my face, nor yet to see ill-faured tykes rin awa' wi' 't afore my verra een."

After the warning given him by Miss Horn, and the strange influence her presence had had on his grandfather, Malcolm preferred keeping up a negative quarrel with the woman.

"Dinna ca' ill names," she returned: "my dog wad tak it waur to be ca'd an ill faured tyke, nor to hae fish flung in his face. Lat's see what's i' yer basket, I say."

As she spoke, she laid her hand on the basket, but Malcolm drew back, and turned away towards the gate.

"Lord safe us!" she cried, with a yelling laugh; "ye're no feared at an auld wife like me?"

"I dinna ken; maybe ay an' maybe no—I wadna say. But I dinna want to hae onything to du wi' ye, mem."

"Ma'colm MacPhail," said Mrs Catanach, lowering her voice to a hoarse whisper, while every trace of laughter vanished from her countenance, "ye hae had mair to du wi' me nor ye ken, an' aiblins ye'll hae mair yet nor ye can weel help. Sae caw canny, my man."

"Ye may hae the layin' o' me oot," said Malcolm, "but it sanna be wi' my wull; an' gien I hae ony life left i' me, I s' gie ye a fleg (fright)."

"Ye may get a war yersel': I hae frichtit the deid afore noo. Sae gang yer wa's to Mistress Coorthoup, wi' a flech (flea) i' yer lug (ear). I wuss ye luck—sic luck as I wad wuss ye I—"

Her last words sounded so like a curse, that to overcome a cold creep, Malcolm had to force a laugh.

The cook at the House bought all his fish, for they had had none for the last few days, because of the storm; and he was turning to go home by the river side, when he heard a tap on a window, and saw Mrs Courthope beckoning him to another door.

"His lordship desired me to send you to him, Malcolm, the next time you called," she said.

"Weel, mem, here I am," answered the youth.

"You'll find him in the flower garden," she said. "He's up early today for a wonder."

He left his basket at the top of the stairs that led down the rock to the level of the burn, and walked up the valley of the stream.

The garden was a curious old fashioned place, with high hedges, and close alleys of trees, where two might have wandered long without meeting, and it was some time before he found any hint of the presence of the marquis. At length, however, he heard voices, and following the sound, walked along one of the alleys till he came to a little arbour, where he discovered the marquis seated, and, to his surprise, the white robed lady of the sands beside him. A great deer hound at his master's feet was bristling his mane, and baring his eye teeth with a growl, but the girl had a hold of his collar.

"Who are you?" asked the marquis rather gruffly, as if he had never seen him before.

"I beg yer lordship's pardon," said Malcolm, "but they telled me yer lordship wantit to see me, and sent me to the flooer garden. Will I gang, or will I bide?"

The marquis looked at him for a moment, frowningly, and made no reply. But the frown gradually relaxed before Malcolm's modest but unflinching gaze, and the shadow of a smile slowly usurped its place. He still kept silent, however.

"Am I to gang or bide, my lord?" repeated Malcolm.

"Can't you wait for an answer?"

"As lang's yer lordship likes—Will I gang an' walk aboot, mem —my leddy, till his lordship's made up his min'? Wad that please him, duv ye think?" he said, in the tone of one who seeks advice.

But the girl only smiled, and the marquis said, "Go to the devil."

"I maun luik to yer lordship for the necessar' directions," rejoined Malcolm.

"Your tongue's long enough to inquire as you go," said the marquis.

A reply in the same strain rushed to Malcolm's lips, but he checked himself in time, and stood silent, with his bonnet in his band, fronting the two. The marquis sat gazing as if he had nothing to say to him, but after a few moments the lady spoke—not to Malcolm, however.

"Is there any danger in boating here, papa?" she said.

"Not more, I daresay, than there ought to be," replied the marquis listlessly. "Why do you ask?"

"Because I should so like a row! I want to see how the shore looks to the mermaids."

"Well, I will take you some day, if we can find a proper boat."

"Is yours a proper boat?" she asked, turning to Malcolm with a sparkle of fun in her eyes.

"That depen's on my lord's definition o' proper."

"Definition!" repeated the marquis.

"Is 't ower lang a word, my lord?" asked Malcolm.

The marquis only smiled.

"I ken what ye mean. It's a strange word in a fisher lad's mou', ye think. But what for should na a fisher lad hae a smatterin' o' loagic, my lord? For Greek or Laitin there's but sma' opportunity o' exerceese in oor pairts; but for loagic, a fisher body may aye haud his ban' in i' that. He can aye be tryin' 't upo' 's wife, or 's guid mother, or upo' 's boat, or upo' the fish whan they winna tak. Loagic wad save a heap o' cursin' an' ill words—amo' the fisher fowk, I mean, my lord."

"Have you been to college?"

"Na, my lord—the mair's the pity! But I've been to the school sin' ever I can min'."

"Do they teach logic there?"

"A kin' o' 't. Mr Graham sets us to try oor ban' whiles—jist to mak 's a bit gleg (quick and keen), ye ken."

"You don't mean you go to school still?"

"I dinna gang reg'lar; but I gang as aften as Mr Graham wants me to help him, an' I aye gether something."

"So it 's schoolmaster you are as well as fisherman? Two strings to your bow!—Who pays you for teaching?"

"Ow! naebody. Wha wad pay me for that?"

"Why, the schoolmaster."

"Na, but that wad be an affront, my lord!"

"How can you afford the time for nothing?"

"The time comes to little, compairt wi' what Mr Graham gies me i' the lang forenichts—i' the winter time, ye ken, my lord, whan the sea's whiles ower contumahcious to be meddlet muckle wi'."

"But you have to support your grandfather."

"My gran'father wad be ill pleased to hear ye say 't, my lord. He's terrible independent; an' what wi' his pipes, an' his lamps, an' his shop, he could keep's baith. It's no muckle the likes o' us wants. He winna lat me gang far to the fishin', so that I hae the mair time to read an' gang to Mr Graham."

As the youth spoke, the marquis eyed him with apparently growing interest.

"But you haven't told me whether your boat is a proper one," said the lady.

"Proper eneuch, mem, for what's required o' her. She taks guid fish."

"But is it a proper boat for me to have a row in?"

"No wi' that goon on, mem, as I telled ye afore."

"The water won't get in, will it?"

"No more than's easy gotten oot again."

"Do you ever put up a sail?"

"Whiles—a wee bit o' a lug sail."

"Nonsense, Flow!" said the marquis. "I'll see about it."

Then turning to Malcolm,—"You may go," he said. "When I want you I will send for you."

Malcolm thought with himself that he had sent for him this time before he wanted him; but he made his bow, and departed—not without disappointment, for he had expected the marquis to say something about his grandfather going to the House with his pipes, a request he would fain have carried to the old man to gladden his heart withal.

Lord Lossie had been one of the boon companions of the Prince of Wales—considerably higher in type, it is true, yet low enough to accept usage for law, and measure his obligation by the custom of his peers: duty merely amounted to what was expected of him, and honour, the flitting shadow of the garment of truth, was his sole divinity. Still he had a heart, and it would speak,—so long at least, as the object affecting it was present. But, alas! it had no memory. Like the unjust judge, he might redress a wrong that cried to him, but out of sight and hearing it had for him no existence. To a man he would not have told a deliberate lie—except, indeed, a woman was in the case; but to women he had lied enough to sink the whole ship of fools. Nevertheless, had the accusing angel himself called him a liar, he would have instantly offered him his choice of weapons.

There was in him by nature, however, a certain generosity which all the vice he had shared in had not quenched. Overbearing, he was not yet too overbearing to appreciate a manly carriage, and had been pleased with what some would have considered the boorishness of Malcolm's behaviour—such not perceiving that it had the same source as the true aristocratic bearing—namely, a certain unselfish confidence which is the mother of dignity.

He had, of course, been a spendthrift—and so much the better, being otherwise what he was; for a cautious and frugal voluptuary is about the lowest style of man. Hence he had never been out of difficulties, and when, a year or so agone, he succeeded to his brother's marquisate, he was,

notwithstanding his enlarged income, far too much involved to hope any immediate rescue from them. His new property, however, would afford him a refuge from troublesome creditors; there he might also avoid expenditure for a season, and perhaps rally the forces of a dissolute life; the place was not new to him, having, some twenty years before, spent nearly twelve months there, of which time the recollections were not altogether unpleasant: weighing all these things he had made up his mind, and here he was at Lossie House.

The marquis was about fifty years of age, more worn than his years would account for, yet younger than his years in expression, for his conscience had never bitten him very deep. He was middle sized, broad shouldered but rather thin, with fine features of the aquiline Greek type, light blue hazy eyes, and fair hair, slightly curling and streaked with gray. His manners were those of one polite for his own sake. To his remote inferiors he was kind—would even encourage them to liberties, but might in turn take greater with them than they might find agreeable. He was fond of animals—would sit for an hour stroking the head of Demon, his great Irish deerhound; but at other times would tease him to a wrath which touched the verge of dangerous. He was fond of practical jokes, and would not hesitate to indulge himself even in such as were incompatible with any genuine refinement: the sort had been in vogue in his merrier days, and Lord Lossie had ever been one of the most fertile in inventing, and loudest in enjoying them. For the rest, if he was easily enraged, he was readily appeased; could drink a great deal, but was no drunkard; and held as his creed that a God had probably made the world and set it going, but that he did not care a brass farthing, as he phrased it, how it went on, or what such an insignificant being as a man did or left undone in it. Perhaps he might amuse himself with it, he said, but he doubted it. As to men, he believed every man loved himself supremely, and therefore was in natural warfare with every other man. Concerning women he professed himself unable to give a definite utterance of any sort—and yet, he would add, he had had opportunities.

The mother of Florimel had died when she was a mere child, and from that time she had been at school until her father brought her away to share his fresh honours. She knew little, that little was not correct, and had it been, would have yet been of small value. At school she had been under many laws, and had felt their slavery: she was now in the third heaven of delight with her liberty. But the worst of foolish laws is, that when the insurgent spirit casts them off, it is but too ready to cast away with them the genial self-restraint which these fretting trammels have smothered beneath them.

Her father regarded her as a child, of whom it was enough to require that she should keep out of mischief. He said to himself now and then that he must find a governess for her; but as yet he had not begun to look for one. Meantime he neither exercised the needful authority over her, nor treated her as a companion. His was a shallow nature, never very pleasantly conscious of itself except in the whirl of excitement, and the glitter of crossing lights: with a lovely daughter by his side, he neither sought to search into her being, nor to aid its unfolding, but sat brooding over past pleasures, or fancying others yet in store for him—lost in the dull flow of life along the lazy reach to whose mire its once tumultuous torrent had now descended. But, indeed, what could such a man have done for the education of a young girl? How many of the qualities he understood and enjoyed in women could he desire to see developed in his daughter? There was yet enough of the father in him to expect those qualities in her to which in other women he had been an insidious foe; but had he not done what in him lay to destroy his right of claiming such from her?

So Lady Florimel was running wild, and enjoying it. As long as she made her appearance at meals, and looked happy, her father would give himself no trouble about her. How he himself managed to live in those first days without company—what he thought about or speculated upon, it were hard to say. All he could be said to do was to ride here and there over the estate with his steward, Mr Crathie, knowing little and caring less about farming, or crops, or cattle. He had by this time, however, invited a few friends to visit him, and expected their arrival before long.

"How do you like this dull life, Flory?" he said, as they walked up the garden to breakfast.

"Dull, papa!" she returned. "You never were at a girls' school, or you wouldn't call this dull. It is the merriest life in the world. To go where you like, and have miles of room! And such room! It's the loveliest place in the world, papa!"

He smiled a small, satisfied smile, and stooping stroked his Demon.

# CHAPTER XIV: MEG PARTAN'S LAMP

Malcolm went down the riverside, not over pleased with the marquis; for, although unconscious of it as such, he had a strong feeling of personal dignity.

As he threaded the tortuous ways of the Seaton towards his own door, he met sounds of mingled abuse and apology. Such were not infrequent in that quarter, for one of the women who lived there was a termagant, and the door of her cottage was generally open. She was known as Meg Partan. Her husband's real name was of as little consequence in life as it is in my history, for almost everybody in the fishing villages of that coast was and is known by his to-name, or nickname, a device for distinction rendered absolutely necessary by the paucity of surnames occasioned by the persistent intermarriage of the fisher folk. Partan is the Scotch for crab, but the immediate recipient of the name was one of the gentlest creatures in the place, and hence it had been surmised by some that, the grey mare being the better horse, the man was thus designated from the crabbedness of his wife; but the probability is he brought the agnomen with him from school, where many such apparently misfitting names are unaccountably generated.

In the present case, however, the apologies were not issuing as usual from the mouth of Davy Partan, but from that of the blind piper. Malcolm stood for a moment at the door to understand the matter of contention, and prepare him to interfere judiciously.

"Gien ye suppose, piper, 'at ye're peyed to drive fowk oot o' their beds at sic hoors as yon, it 's time the toon cooncil was informed o' yer mistak," said Meg Partan, with emphasis on the last syllable.

"Ta coot peoples up in ta town are not half so hart upon her as you, Mistress Partan," insinuated poor Duncan, who, knowing himself in fault, was humble; "and it 's tere tat she's paid," he added, with a bridling motion, "and not town here pelow."

"Dinna ye glorifee yersel' to suppose there's a fisher, lat alane a fisher's wife, in a' the haill Seaton 'at wad lippen (trust) till an auld haiveril like you to hae them up i' the mornin'! Haith! I was oot o' my bed hoors or I hard the skirlin' o' your pipes. Troth I ken weel hoo muckle ower ear' ye was! But what fowk taks in han', fowk sud put oot o' han' in a proper mainner, and no misguggle 't a'thegither like yon. An' for what they say i' the toon, there's Mistress Catanach—"

"Mistress Catanach is a paad 'oman," said Duncan.

"I wad advise you, piper, to haud a quaiet sough about her. She's no to be meddlet wi', Mistress Catanach, I can tell ye. Gien ye anger her, it'll be the waur for ye. The neist time ye hae a lyin' in, she'll be raxin' (reaching) ye a hairless pup, or, deed, maybe a stan' o' bagpipes, as the produck."

"Her nain sel' will not pe requiring her sairvices, Mistress Partan; she'll pe leafing tat to you, if you'll excuse me," said Duncan.

"Deed, ye're richt there! An auld speldin' (dried haddock) like you! Ha! ha! ha!"

Malcolm judged it time to interfere, and stepped into the cottage. Duncan was seated in the darkest corner of the room, with an apron over his knees, occupied with a tin lamp. He had taken out the wick and laid its flat tube on the hearth, had emptied the oil into a saucer, and was now rubbing the lamp vigorously: cleanliness rather than brightness must have been what he sought to produce.

Malcolm's instinct taught him to side so far with the dame concerning Mrs Catanach, and thereby turn the torrent away from his grandfather.

"'Deed ye're richt there, Mistress Findlay!" he said. "She's no to be meddlet wi'. She's no mowse (safe)."

Malcolm was a favourite with Meg, as with all the women of the place; hence she did not even start in resentment at his sudden appearance, but, turning to Duncan, exclaimed victoriously,– "Hear till her ain oye! He's a laad o' sense!"

"Ay, hear to him!" rejoined the old man with pride. "My Malcolm will always pe speaking tat which will pe worth ta hearing with ta ears. Poth of you and me will be knowing ta Mistress Catanach pretty well—eh, Malcolm, my son? We'll not be trusting her fery too much—will we, my son?"

"No a hair, daddy," returned Malcolm.

"She's a dooms clever wife, though; an' ane 'at ye may lippen till i' the w'y o' her ain callin'," said Meg Partan, whose temper had improved a little under the influence of the handsome youth's presence and cheery speech.

"She'll not pe toubting it," responded Duncan; "put, ach! ta voman 'll be hafing a crim feesage and a fearsome eye!"

Like all the blind, he spoke as if he saw perfectly.

"Weel, I hae hard fowk say 'at ye bude (behoved) to hae the second sicht," said Mrs Findlay, laughing rudely; "but wow! it stan's ye in sma' service gien that be a' it comes till. She's a guid natur'd, sonsy luikin' wife as ye wad see; an' for her een, they're jist sic likes mine ain.—Haena ye near dune wi' that lamp yet?"

"The week of it 'll pe shust a lettle out of orter," answered the old man. "Ta pairns has been' pulling it up with a peen from ta top, and not putting it in at ta hole for ta purpose. And she'll pe thinking you'll be cleaning off ta purnt part with a peen yourself, rna'am, and not with ta pair of scissors she tolt you of, Mistress Partan."

"Gae 'wa' wi' yer nonsense!" cried Meg. "Daur ye say 1 dinna ken hoo to trim an uilyie lamp wi' the best blin' piper that ever cam frae the bare leggit Heelans?"

"A choke's a choke, ma'am," said Duncan, rising with dignity; "put for a laty to make a choke of a man's pare leks is not ta propriety!"

"Oot o' my hoose wi' ye!" screamed the she Partan. "Wad ye threep (insist) upo' me onything I said was less nor proaper. 'At I sud say what wadna stan' the licht as weels the bare houghs o' ony heelan' rascal 'at ever lap a lawlan' dyke!"

"Hoot toot, Mistress Findlay," interposed Malcolm, as his grandfather strode from the door; "ye maunna forget 'at he's auld an' blin'; an' a' heelan' fowk's some kittle (touchy) about their legs."

"Deil shochle them!" exclaimed the Partaness; "what care I for 's legs!"

Duncan had brought the germ of this ministry of light from his native Highlands, where he had practised it in his own house, no one but himself being permitted to clean, or fill, or, indeed, trim the lamp. How first this came about, I do not believe the old man himself knew. But he must have had some feeling of a call to the work; for he had not been a month in Portlossie, before he had installed himself in several families as the genius of their lamps, and he gradually extended the relation until it comprehended almost all the houses in the village.

It was strange and touching to see the sightless man thus busy about light for others. A marvellous symbol of faith he was—not only believing in sight, but in the mysterious, and to him altogether unintelligible means by which others saw! In thus lending his aid to a faculty in which he had no share, he himself followed the trail of the garments of Light, stooping ever and anon to lift and bear her skirts. He haunted the steps of the unknown Power, and flitted about the walls of her temple as we mortals haunt the borders of the immortal land, knowing nothing of what lies behind the unseen veil, yet believing in an unrevealed grandeur. Or shall we say he stood like the forsaken merman, who, having no soul to be saved, yet lingered and listened outside the prayer echoing church? Only old Duncan had got farther: though he saw not a glimmer of the glory, he yet asserted his part and lot in it, by the aiding of his fellows to that of which he lacked the very conception himself. He was a doorkeeper in the house, yea, by faith the blind man became even a priest in the temple of Light.

Even when his grandchild was the merest baby, he would never allow the gloaming to deepen into night without kindling for his behoof the brightest and cleanest of train oil lamps. The women who at first looked in to offer their services, would marvel at the trio of blind man, babe, and burning lamp, and some would expostulate with him on the needless waste. But neither would he listen to

their words, nor accept their offered assistance in dressing or undressing the child. The sole manner in which he would consent to avail himself of their willingness to help him, was to leave the baby in charge of this or that neighbour while he went his rounds with the bagpipes: when he went lamp cleaning he always took him along with him.

By this change of guardians Malcolm was a great gainer, for thus he came to be surreptitiously nursed by a baker's dozen of mothers, who had a fund of not very wicked amusement in the lamentations of the old man over his baby's refusal of nourishment, and his fears that he was pining away. But while they honestly declared that a healthier child had never been seen in Portlossie, they were compelled to conceal the too satisfactory reasons of the child's fastidiousness; for they were persuaded that the truth would only make Duncan terribly jealous, and set him on contriving how at once to play his pipes and carry his baby.

He had certain days for visiting certain houses, and cleaning the lamps in them. The housewives had at first granted him as a privilege the indulgence of his whim, and as such alone had Duncan regarded it; but by and by, when they found their lamps burn so much better from being properly attended to, they began to make him some small return; and at length it became the custom with every housewife who accepted his services, to pay him a halfpenny a week during the winter months for cleaning her lamp. He never asked for it; if payment was omitted, never even hinted at it; received what was given him thankfully; and was regarded with kindness, and, indeed, respect, by all. Even Mrs Partan, as he alone called her, was his true friend: no intensity of friendship could have kept her from scolding. I believe if we could thoroughly dissect the natures of scolding women, we should find them in general not at all so unfriendly as they are unpleasant.

A small trade in oil arose from his connection with the lamps, and was added to the list of his general dealings. The fisher folk made their own oil, but sometimes it would run short, and then recourse was had to Duncan's little store, prepared by himself of the best; chiefly, now, from the livers of fish caught by his grandson. With so many sources of income, no one wondered at his getting on. Indeed no one would have been surprised to hear, long before Malcolm had begun to earn anything, that the old man had already laid by a trifle.

# CHAPTER XV: THE SLOPE OF THE DUNE

Looking at Malcolm's life from the point of his own consciousness, and not from that of the so called world, it was surely pleasant enough. Innocence, devotion to another, health, pleasant labour with an occasional shadow of danger to arouse the energies, leisure, love of reading, a lofty minded friend, and, above all, a supreme presence, visible to his heart in the meeting of vaulted sky and outspread sea, and felt at moments in any waking wind that cooled his glowing cheek and breathed into him anew of the breath of life,—lapped in such conditions, bathed in such influences, the youth's heart was swelling like a rosebud ready to burst into blossom.

But he had never yet felt the immediate presence of woman in any of her closer relations. He had never known mother or sister; and, although his voice always assumed a different tone and his manner grew more gentle in the presence, of a woman, old or young, he had found little individually attractive amongst the fisher girls. There was not much in their circumstances to bring out the finer influences of womankind in them: they had rough usage, hard work at the curing and carrying of fish and the drying of nets, little education, and but poor religious instruction. At the same time any failure in what has come to be specially called virtue, was all but unknown amongst them; and the profound faith in women, and corresponding worship of everything essential to womanhood which essentially belonged to a nature touched to fine issues, had as yet met with no check. It had never come into Malcolm's thoughts that there were live women capable of impurity. Mrs. Catanach was the only woman he had ever looked upon with dislike—and that dislike had generated no more than the vaguest suspicion. Let a woman's faults be all that he had ever known in woman; he yet could look on her with reverence—and the very heart of reverence is love, whence it may be plainly seen that Malcolm's nature was at once prepared for much delight, and exposed to much suffering. It followed that all the women of his class loved and trusted him; and hence in part it came that, absolutely free of arrogance, he was yet confident in the presence of women. The tradesmen's daughters in the upper town took pains to show him how high above him they were, and women of better position spoke to him with a kind condescension that made him feel the gulf that separated them; but to one and all he spoke with the frankness of manly freedom.

But he had now arrived at that season when, in the order of things, a man is compelled to have at least a glimmer of the life which consists in sharing life with another. When once, through the thousand unknown paths of creation, the human being is so far divided from God that his individuality is secured, it has become yet more needful that the crust gathered around him in the process should be broken; and the love between man and woman arising from a difference deep in the heart of God, and essential to the very being of each—for by no words can I express my scorn of the evil fancy that the distinction between them is solely or even primarily physical—is one of his most powerful forces for blasting the wall of separation, and first step towards the universal harmony of twain making one. That love should be capable of ending in such vermiculate results as too often appear, is no more against the loveliness of the divine idea, than that the forms of man and woman, the spirit gone from them, should degenerate to such things as may not be looked upon. There is no plainer sign of the need of a God, than the possible fate of love. The celestial Cupido may soar aloft on seraph wings that assert his origin, or fall down on the belly of a snake and creep to hell.

But Malcolm was not of the stuff of which coxcombs are made, and had not begun to think even of the abyss that separated Lady Florimel and himself—an abyss like that between star and star, across which stretches no mediating air—a blank and blind space. He felt her presence only as that of a being to be worshipped, to be heard with rapture, and yet addressed without fear.

Though not greatly prejudiced in favour of books, Lady Florimel had burrowed a little in the old library at Lossie House, and had chanced on the Faerie Queene. She had often come upon the name of the author in books of extracts, and now, turning over its leaves, she found her own. Indeed, where

else could her mother have found the name Florimel? Her curiosity was roused, and she resolved —no light undertaking—to read the poem through, and see who and what the lady, Florimel, was. Notwithstanding the difficulty she met with at first, she had persevered, and by this time it had become easy enough. The copy she had found was in small volumes, of which she now carried one about with her wherever she wandered; and making her first acquaintance with the sea and the poem together, she soon came to fancy that she could not fix her attention on the book without the sound of the waves for an accompaniment to the verse—although the gentler noise of an ever flowing stream would have better suited the nature of Spenser's rhythm; for indeed, he had composed the greater part of the poem with such a sound in his ears, and there are indications in the poem itself that he consciously took the river as his chosen analogue after which to model the flow of his verse.

It was a sultry afternoon, and Florimel lay on the seaward side of the dune, buried in her book. The sky was foggy with heat, and the sea lay dull, as if oppressed by the superincumbent air, and leaden in hue, as if its colour had been destroyed by the sun. The tide was rising slowly, with a muffled and sleepy murmur on the sand; for here were no pebbles to impart a hiss to the wave as it rushed up the bank, or to go softly hurtling down the slope with it as it sank. As she read, Malcolm was walking towards her along the top of the dune, but not until he came almost above where she lay, did she hear his step in the soft quenching sand.

She nodded kindly, and he descended approaching her.

"Did ye want me, my leddy?" he asked.

"No," she answered.

"I wasna sure whether ye noddit 'cause ye wantit me or no," said Malcolm, and turned to reascend the dune.

"Where are you going now?" she asked.

"Ow! nae gait in particlar. I jist cam oot to see hoo things war luikin."

"What things?"

"Ow! jist the lift (sky), an' the sea, an' sic generals."

That Malcolm's delight in the presences of Nature—I say presences, as distinguished from forms and colours and all analyzed sources of her influences—should have already become a conscious thing to himself requires to account for it the fact that his master, Graham, was already under the influences of Wordsworth, whom he had hailed as a Crabbe that had burst his shell and spread the wings of an eagle the virtue passed from him to his pupil.

"I won't detain you from such important business," said Lady Florimel, and dropped her eyes on her book.

"Gien ye want my company, my leddy, I can luik aboot me jist as weel here as ony ither gait," said Malcolm.

And as he spoke, he gently stretched himself on the dune, about three yards aside and lower down. Florimel looked half amused and half annoyed, but she had brought it on herself, and would punish him only by dropping her eyes again on her book, and keeping silent. She had come to the Florimel of snow.

Malcolm lay and looked at her for a few moments pondering; then fancying he had found the cause of her offence, rose, and, passing to the other side of her, again lay down, but at a still more respectful distance.

"Why do you move?" she asked, without looking up.

"'Cause there's jist a possible air o' win' frae the nor'east."

"And you want me to shelter you from it?" said Lady Florimel.

"Na, na, my leddy," returned Malcolm, laughing; "for as bonny's ye are, ye wad be but sma' scoug (shelter)."

"Why did you move, then?" persisted the girl, who understood what he said just about half.

"Weel, my leddy, ye see it 's het, an' aye amang the fish mair or less, an' I didna ken 'at I was to hae the honour o' sittin' doon aside ye; sae I thocht ye was maybe smellin' the fish. It's healthy eneuch, but some fowk disna like it; an' for a' that I ken, you gran' fowk's senses may be mair ready to scunner (take offence) than oors. 'Deed, my leddy, we wadna need to be particlar, whiles, or it wad be the waur for 's."

Simple as it was, the explanation served to restore her equanimity, disturbed by what had seemed his presumption in lying down in her presence: she saw that she had mistaken the action. The fact was, that, concluding from her behaviour she had something to say to him, but was not yet at leisure for him, he had lain down, as a loving dog might, to await her time. It was devotion, not coolness. To remain standing before her would have seemed a demand on her attention; to lie down was to withdraw and wait. But Florimel, although pleased, was only the more inclined to torment—a peculiarity of disposition which she inherited from her father: she bowed her face once more over her book, and read though three whole stanzas, without however understanding a single phrase in them, before she spoke. Then looking up, and regarding for a moment the youth who lay watching her with the eyes of the servants in the psalm, she said,—"Well? What are you waiting for?"

"I thocht ye wantit me, my leddy! I beg yer pardon," answered Malcolm, springing to his feet, and turning to go.

"Do you ever read?" she asked.

"Aften that," replied Malcolm, turning again, and standing stock still. "An' I like best to read jist as yer leddyship's readin' the noo, lyin' o' the san' hill, wi' the haill sea afore me, an naething atween me an' the icebergs but the watter an' the stars an' a wheen islands. It's like readin' wi' fower een, that!"

"And what do you read on such occasions?" carelessly drawled his persecutor.

"Whiles ae thing an' whiles anither—whiles onything I can lay my han's upo'. I like traivels an' sic like weel eneuch; an' history, gien it be na ower dry like. I div not like sermons, an' there's mair o' them in Portlossie than onything ither. Mr Graham—that's the schoolmaister—has a gran' libbrary, but it 's maist Laitin an' Greek, an' though I like the Laitin weel, it 's no what I wad read i' the face o' the sea. When ye're in dreid o' wantin' a dictionar', that spiles a'."

"Can you read Latin then?"

"Ay: what for no, my leddy? I can read Virgil middlin'; an' Horace's Ars Poetica, the whilk Mr Graham says is no its richt name ava, but jist Epistola ad Pisones; for gien they bude to gie 't anither it sud ha' been Ars Dramatica. But leddies dinna care aboot sic things."

"You gentlemen give us no chance. You won't teach us."

"Noo, my leddy, dinna begin to mak' ghem o' me, like my lord. I cud ill bide it frae him, an' gien ye tak till 't as weel, 1 maun jist haud oot o' yer gait. nae gentleman, an' hae ower muckle respeck for what becomes a gentleman to be pleased at bein' ca'd ane. But as for the Laitin, I'll be prood to instruck yer leddyship whan ye please."

" afraid I've no great wish to learn," said Florimel.

"I daur say no," said Malcolm quietly, and again addressed himself to go.

"Do you like novels?" asked the girl.

"I never saw a novelle. There's no ane amo' a' Mr Graham's buiks, an' I s' warran' there's full twa hunner o' them. I dinna believe there's a single novelle in a' Portlossie."

"Don't be too sure: there are a good many in our library."

"I hadna the presumption, my leddy, to coont the Hoose in Portlossie—Ye'll hae a sicht o' buiks up there, no?"

"Have you never been in the library?"

"I never set fut i' the hoose—'cep' i' the kitchie, an' ance or twise steppin' across the ha' frae the ae door to the tither. I wad fain see what kin' o' a place great fowk like you bides in, an' what kin' o' things, buiks an' a', ye hae aboot ye. It's no easy for the like o' huz 'at has but a but an' a ben (outer

and inner room), to unnerstan' hoo ye fill sic a muckle place as yon. I wad be aye i' the libbrary, I think. But," he went on, glancing involuntarily at the dainty little foot that peered from under her dress, "yer leddyship's sae licht fittit, ye'll be ower the haill dwallin', like a wee bird in a muckle cage. Whan I want room, I like it wantin' wa's."

Once more he was on the point of going, but once more a word detained him.

"Do you ever read poetry?"

"Ay, sometimes—whan it 's auld."

"One would think you were talking about wine! Does age improve poetry as well?"

"I ken naething aboot wine, my leddy. Miss Horn gae me a glaiss the ither day, an' it tastit weel, but whether it was merum or mixtum, I couldna tell mair nor a haddick. Doobtless age does gar poetry smack a wee better; but I said auld only 'cause there's sae little new poetry that I care aboot comes my gait. Mr Graham's unco ta'en wi' Maister Wordsworth—no an ill name for a poet; do ye ken onything aboot him, my leddy?"

"I never heard of him."

"I wadna gie an auld Scots ballant for a barrowfu' o' his. There's gran' bits here an' there, nae doobt, but it 's ower mim mou'ed for me."

"What do you mean by that?"

"It's ower saft an' sliddery like i' yer mou', my leddy."

"What sort do you like then?"

"I like Milton weel. Ye get a fine mou'fu' o' him. I dinna like the verse 'at ye can murle (crumble) oot atween yer lips an' yer teeth. I like the verse 'at ye maun open yer mou' weel to lat gang. Syne it 's worth yer while, whether ye unnerstan' 't or no."

"I don't see how you can say that."

"Jist hear, my leddy! Here's a bit I cam upo' last nicht:

His volant touch, Instinct through all proportions, low and high, Fled and pursued transverse the resonant fugue.

Hear till 't! It's gran'—even though ye dinna ken what it means a bit."

"I do know what it means," said Florimel. "Let me see: volant means—what does volant mean?"

"It means fleein', I suppose."

"Well, he means some musician or other."

"Of coorse: it maun be Jubal—I ken a' the words but fugue; though I canna tell what business instinct an' proportions hae there."

"It's describing how the man's fingers, playing a fugue—on the organ, I suppose,—"

"A fugue 'll be some kin' o' a tune, than? That casts a heap o' licht on't, my leddy—I never saw an organ: what is 't like?"

"Something like a pianoforte."

"But I never saw ane o' them either. It's ill makin' things a'thegither oot o' yer ain heid."

"Well, it 's played with the fingers—like this," said Florimel. "And the fugue is a kind of piece where one part pursues the other,—"

"An' syne," cried Malcolm eagerly, "that ane turns roon' an' rins efter the first;—that 'll be 'fled and pursued transverse.' I hae't! I hae't! See, my leddy, what it is to hae sic schoolin', wi' music an' a'! The proportions—that's the relation o' the notes to ane anither; an' fugue—that comes frae fugere to flee —'fled and pursued transverse the resonant fugue '—the tane rinnin' efter the tither, roon' an' roon'. Ay, I hae't noo!– Resonant—that's echoing or resounding. But what's instinct my leddy? It maun be an adjective, thinkin'."

Although the modesty of Malcolm had led him to conclude the girl immeasurably his superior in learning because she could tell him what a fugue was, he soon found she could help him no further, for she understood scarcely anything about grammar, and her vocabulary was limited enough. Not a

doubt interfered, however, with her acceptance of the imputed superiority; for it is as easy for some to assume as it is for others to yield.

"I hae't! It is an adjective," cried Malcolm, after a short pause of thought. "It's the touch that's instinct. But I fancy there sud be a comma efter instinct.—His fingers were sae used till 't that they could 'maist do the thing o' themsel's—Isna 't lucky, my leddy, that I thocht o' sayin' 't ower to you! I'll read the buik frae the beginnin',—it 's the neist to the last, I think,—jist to come upo' the twa lines i' their ain place, ohn their expeckin' me like, an' see hoo gran' they soon' whan a body unnerstan's them. Thank ye, my leddy."

"I suppose you read Milton to your grandfather?"

"Ay, sometimes—i' the lang forenights."

"What do you mean by the forenights?"

"I mean efter it 's dark an' afore ye gang to yer bed.—He likes the battles o' the angels best. As sune 's it comes to ony fechtin', up he gets, an' gangs stridin' aboot the flure; an' whiles he maks a claucht at 's claymore; an' faith! ance he maist cawed aff my heid wi' 't, for he had made a mistak aboot whaur I was sittin'."

"What's a claymore?"

"A muckle heelan' braidswoord, my leddy. Clay frae gladius verra likly; an' more 's the Gaelic for great: claymore, great sword. Blin' as my gran'father is, ye wad sweer he had fochten in 's day, gien ye hard hoo he'll gar't whurr an' whustle aboot 's heid as gien 't war a bit lath o' wud."

"But that's very dangerous," said Florimel, something aghast at the recital.

"Ow, ay!" assented Malcolm, indifferently,—"Gien ye wad luik in, my leddy, I wad lat ye see his claymore, an' his dirk, an' his skene dhu, an' a'."

"I don't think I could venture. He's too dreadful! I should be terrified at him."

"Dreidfu' my leddy? He's the quaietest, kin'liest auld man I that is, providit ye say naething for a Cawmill, or agen ony ither hielanman. Ye see he comes o' Glenco, an' the Cawmills are jist a hate till him—specially Cawmill o' Glenlyon, wha was the warst o' them a'. Ye sud hear him tell the story till 's pipes, my leddy! It's gran' to hear him! An' the poetry a' his ain!"

# CHAPTER XVI: THE STORM

There came a blinding flash, and a roar through the leaden air, followed by heavy drops mixed with huge hailstones. At the flash, Florimel gave a cry and half rose to her feet, but at the thunder, fell as if stunned by the noise, on the sand. As if with a bound, Malcolm was by her side, but when she perceived his terror, she smiled, and laying hold of his hand, sprung to her feet.

"Come, come," she cried; and still holding his hand, hurried up the dune, and down the other side of it. Malcolm accompanied her step for step, strongly tempted, however, to snatch her up, and run for the bored craig: he could not think why she made for the road—high on an unscalable embankment, with the park wall on the other side. But she ran straight for a door in the embankment itself, dark between two buttresses, which, never having seen it open, he had not thought of. For a moment she stood panting before it, while with trembling hand she put a key in the lock; the next she pushed open the creaking door and entered. As she turned to take out the key, she saw Malcolm yards away in the middle of the road and in a cataract of rain, which seemed to have with difficulty suspended itself only until the lady should be under cover. He stood with his bonnet in his hand, watching for a farewell glance.

"Why don't you come in?" she said impatiently.

He was beside her in a moment.

"I didna ken ye wad lat me in," he said.

"I wouldn't have you drowned," she returned, shutting the door.

"Droont!" he repeated, "It wad tak a hantle (great deal) to droon me. I stack to the boddom o' a whumled boat a haill nicht whan I was but fifeteen."

They stood in a tunnel which passed under the road, affording immediate communication between the park and the shore. The further end of it was dark with trees. The upper half of the door by which they had entered was a wooden grating, for the admission of light, and through it they were now gazing, though they could see little but the straight lines of almost perpendicular rain that scratched out the colours of the landscape. The sea was troubled, although no wind blew; it heaved as with an inward unrest. But suddenly there was a great broken sound somewhere in the air; and the next moment a storm came tearing over the face of the sea, covering it with blackness innumerably rent into spots of white. Presently it struck the shore, and a great rude blast came roaring through the grating, carrying with it a sheet of rain, and, catching Florimel's hair, sent it streaming wildly out behind her.

"Dinna ye think, my leddy," said Malcolm, "ye had better mak for the hoose? What wi' the win' an' the weet thegither, ye'll be gettin' yer deith o' cauld. I s' gang wi' ye sae far, gien ye'll alloo me, jist to baud it ohn blawn ye awa'."

The wind suddenly fell, and his last words echoed loud in the vaulted sky. For a moment it grew darker in the silence, and then a great flash carried the world away with it, and left nothing but blackness behind. A roar of thunder followed, and even while it yet bellowed, a white face flitted athwart the grating, and a voice of agony shrieked aloud:

"I dinna ken whaur it comes frae!"

Florimel grasped Malcolm's arm: the face had passed close to hers—only the grating between, and the cry cut through the thunder like a knife.

Instinctively, almost unconsciously, he threw his arm around her, to shield her from her own terror.

"Dinna be fleyt, my leddy," he said. "It's naething but the mad laird. He's a quaiet cratur eneuch, only he disna ken whaur he comes frae—he disna ken whaur onything comes frae—an' he canna bide it. But he wadna hurt leevin' cratur, the laird."

"What a dreadful face!" said the girl, shuddering.

"It's no an ill faured face," said Malcolm, "only the storm's frichtit him by ord'nar, an' it 's unco ghaistly the noo."

"Is there nothing to be done for him?" she said compassionately.

"No upo' this side the grave, I doobt, my leddy," answered Malcolm.

Here coming to herself the girl became aware of her support, and laid her hand on Malcolm's to remove his arm. He obeyed instantly, and she said nothing.

"There was some speech," he went on hurriedly, with a quaver in his voice, "o' pittin' him intill the asylum at Aberdeen, an' no lattin' him scoor the queentry this gait, they said; but it wad hae been sheer cruelty, for the cratur likes naething sac weel as rinnin' aboot, an' does no' mainner o' hurt. A verra bairn can guide him. An' he has jist as guid a richt to the leeberty God gies him as ony man alive, an' mair nor a hantle (more than many)."

"Is nothing known about him?"

"A' thing's known aboot him, my leddy, 'at 's known aboot the lave (rest) o' 's. His father was the laird o' Gersefell—an' for that maitter he's laird himsel' noo. But they say he's taen sic a scunner (disgust) at his mither, that he canna bide the verra word o' mither; he jist cries oot whan he hears 't."

"It seems clearing," said Florimel.

"I doobt it 's only haudin' up for a wee," returned Malcolm, after surveying as much of the sky as was visible through the bars; "but I do think ye had better run for the hoose, my leddy. I s' jist follow ye, a feow yairds ahin', till I see ye safe. Dinna ye be feared—I s' tak guid care: I wadna hae ye seen i' the company o' a fisher lad like me."

There was no doubting the perfect simplicity with which this was said, and the girl took no exception. They left the tunnel, and skirting the bottom of the little hill on which stood the temple of the winds, were presently in the midst of a young wood, through which a gravelled path led towards the House. But they had not gone far ere a blast of wind, more violent than any that had preceded it, smote the wood, and the trees, young larches and birches and sycamores, bent streaming before it. Lady Florimel turned to see where Malcolm was, and her hair went from her like a Maenad's, while her garments flew fluttering and straining, as if struggling to carry her off. She had never in her life before been out in a storm, and she found the battle joyously exciting. The roaring of the wind in the trees was grand; and what seemed their terrified struggles while they bowed and writhed and rose but to bow again, as in mad effort to unfix their earthbound roots and escape, took such sympathetic hold of her imagination, that she flung out her arms, and began to dance and whirl as if herself the genius of the storm. Malcolm, who had been some thirty paces behind, was with her in a moment.

"Isn't it splendid?" she cried.

"It blaws weel—verra near as weel 's my daddy," said Malcolm, enjoying it quite as much as the girl.

"How dare you make game of such a grand uproar?" said Florimel with superiority.

"Mak ghem o' a blast o' win' by comparin' 't to my gran'father!" exclaimed Malcolm. "Hoot, my leddy! its a coamplement to the biggest blast 'at ever blew to be compairt till an auld man like him. ower used to them to min' them muckle mysel', 'cep' to fecht wi' them. But whan I watch the seagoos dartin' like arrowheids throu' the win', I sometimes think it maun be gran' for the angels to caw aboot great flags o' wings in a mortal warstle wi' sic a hurricane as this."

"I don't understand you one bit," said Lady Florimel petulantly.

As she spoke, she went on, but, the blast having abated, Malcolm lingered, to place a proper distance between them.

"You needn't keep so far behind," said Florimel, looking back.

"As yer leddyship pleases," answered Malcolm, and was at once by her side. "I'll gang till ye tell me to stan'.—Eh, sae different 's ye look frae the ither mornin'!"

"What morning?"

"Whan ye was sittin' at the fut o' the bored craig."

"Bored craig? What's that?"

"The rock wi' a hole throu' 'it. Ye ken the rock weel eneuch, my leddy. Ye was sittin' at the fut o' 't, readin' yer buik, as white 's gien ye had been made o' snaw. It cam to me that the rock was the sepulchre, the hole the open door o' 't, an' yersel' ane o' the angels that had faulded his wings an' was waitin' for somebody to tell the guid news till, that he was up an awa'."

"And what do I look like today?" she asked.

"Ow! the day, ye luik like some cratur o' the storm; or the storm itsel' takin' a leevin' shape, an' the bonniest it could; or maybe, like Ahriel, gaein' afore the win', wi' the blast in 's feathers, rufflin' them 'a gaits at ance."

"Who's Ahriel?"

"Ow, the fleein' cratur i' the Tempest! But in your bonny southern speech, I daursay ye wad ca' him—or her, I dinna ken whilk the cratur was—ye wad ca' 't Ayriel?"

"I don't know anything about him or her or it," said Lady Florimel.

"Ye'll hae a' aboot him up i' the libbrary there though," said Malcolm. "The Tempest's the only ane o' Shakspere's plays 'at I hae read, but it 's a gran' ane, as Maister Graham has empooered me to see."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Florimel, "I've lost my book!"

"I'll gang back an' luik for 't this meenute, my leddy," said Malcolm. "I ken ilka fit o' the road we've come, an' it 's no possible but I fa' in wi' 't.—Ye'll sune be hame noo, an' it'll hardly be on again afore ye win in," he added, looking up at the clouds.

"But how am I to get it? I want it very much."

"I'll jest fess 't up to the Hoose, an' say 'at I fan' 't whaur I will fin' 't. But I wiss ye wad len' me yer pocket nepkin to row 't in, for feared for blaudin' 't afore I get it back to ye."

Florimel gave him her handkerchief, and Malcolm took his leave, saying.—"I'll be up i' the coorse o' a half hoor at farthest."

The humble devotion and absolute service of the youth, resembling that of a noble dog, however unlikely to move admiration in Lady Florimel's heart, could not fail to give her a quiet and welcome pleasure. He was an inferior who could be depended upon, and his worship was acceptable. Not a fear of his attentions becoming troublesome ever crossed her mind. The wider and more impassable the distinctions of rank, the more possible they make it for artificial minds to enter into simply human relations; the easier for the oneness of the race to assert itself, in the offering and acceptance of a devoted service. There is more of the genuine human in the relationship between some men and their servants, than between those men and their own sons.

With eyes intent, and keen as those of a gazehound, Malcolm retraced every step, up to the grated door. But no volume was to be seen. Turning from the door of the tunnel, for which he had no Sesame, he climbed to the foot of the wall that crossed it above, and with a bound, a clutch at the top, a pull and a scramble, was in the high road in a moment. From the road to the links was an easy drop, where, starting from the grated door, he retraced their path from the dune. Lady Florimel had dropped the book when she rose, and Malcolm found it lying on the sand, little the worse. He wrapped it in its owner's handkerchief, and set out for the gate at the mouth of the river.

As he came up to it, the keeper, an ill conditioned snarling fellow, who, in the phrase of the Seaton folk, "rade on the riggin (ridge) o' 's authority," rushed out of the lodge, and just as Malcolm was entering, shoved the gate in his face.

"Ye comena in wi'oot the leave o' me," he cried, with a vengeful expression.

"What's that for?" said Malcolm, who had already interposed his great boot, so that the spring bolt could not reach its catch.

"There s' nae lan' loupin' rascals come in here," said Bykes, setting his shoulder to the gate.

That instant he went staggering back to the wall of the lodge, with the gate after him.

"Stick to the wa' there," said Malcolm, as he strode in.

The keeper pursued him with frantic abuse, but he never turned his head. Arrived at the House, he committed the volume to the cook, with a brief account of where he had picked it up, begging her to inquire whether it belonged to the House. The cook sent a maid with it to Lady Florimel, and Malcolm waited until she returned—with thanks and a half crown. He took the money, and returned by the upper gate through the town.

# CHAPTER XVII: THE ACCUSATION

The next morning, soon after their early breakfast, the gate keeper stood in the door of Duncan MacPhail's cottage, with a verbal summons for Malcolm to appear before his lordship.

"An' no to lowse sicht o' ye till ye hae put in yer appearance," he added; "sae gien ye dinna come peaceable, I maun gar ye."

"Whaur's yer warrant?" asked Malcolm coolly.

"Ye wad hae the impidence to deman' my warrant, ye young sorner!" cried Bykes indignantly. "Come yer wa's, my man, or I s' gar ye smairt for 't"

"Haud a quaiet sough, an' gang hame for yer warrant," said Malcolm. "It's lyin' there, doobtless, or ye wadna hae daured to shaw yer face on sic an eeran'."

Duncan, who was dozing in his chair, awoke at the sound of high words. His jealous affection perceived at once that Malcolm was being insulted. He sprang to his feet, stepped swiftly to the wall, caught down his broadsword, and rushed to the door, making the huge weapon quiver and whir about his head as if it had been a slip of tin plate.

"Where is ta rascal?" he shouted. "She'll cut him town! Show her ta lowlan' thief! She'll cut him town! Who'll be insulting her Malcolm?"

But Bykes, at first sight of the weapon, had vanished in dismay.

"Hoot toot, daddy," said Malcolm, taking him by the arm; "there's naebody here. The puir cratur couldna bide the sough o' the claymore. He fled like the autumn wind over the stubble. There's Ossian for't."

"Ta Lord pe praised!" cried Duncan. "She'll be confounded her foes. But what would ta rascal pe wanting, my son?"

Leading him back to his chair, Malcolm told him as much as he knew of the matter.

"Ton't you co for a warrant," said Duncan. "If my lort marquis will pe senting for you as one chentleman sends for another, then you co."

Within an hour Bykes reappeared, accompanied by one of the gamekeepers—an Englishman. The moment he heard the door open, Duncan caught again at his broadsword.

"We want you, my young man," said the gamekeeper, standing on the threshold, with Bykes peeping over his shoulder, in an attitude indicating one foot already lifted to run.

"What for?"

"That's as may appear."

"Whaur's yer warrant?"

"There."

"Lay 't doon o' the table, an' gang back to the door, till I get a sklent at it," said Malcolm. "Ye're an honest man, Wull—but I wadna lippen a snuff mull 'at had mair nor ae pinch intill 't wi' yon cooard cratur ahin' ye."

He was afraid of the possible consequences of his grandfather's indignation.

The gamekeeper did at once as he was requested, evidently both amused with the bearing of the two men and admiring it. Having glanced at the paper, Malcolm put it in his pocket, and whispering a word to his grandfather, walked away with his captors.

As they went to the House, Bykes was full of threats of which he sought to enhance the awfulness by the indefiniteness; but Will told Malcolm as much as he knew of the matter—namely, that the head gamekeeper, having lost some dozen of his sitting pheasants, had enjoined a strict watch; and that Bykes having caught sight of Malcolm in the very act of getting over the wall, had gone and given information against him.

No one about the premises except Bykes would have been capable of harbouring suspicion of Malcolm; and the head gamekeeper had not the slightest; but, knowing that his lordship found little

enough to amuse him, and anticipating some laughter from the confronting of two such opposite characters, he had gone to the marquis with Byke's report,—and this was the result. His lordship was not a magistrate, and the so called warrant was merely a somewhat sternly worded expression of his desire that Malcolm should appear and answer to the charge.

The accused was led into a vaulted chamber opening from the hall—a genuine portion, to judge from its deep low arched recesses, the emergence of truncated portions of two or three groins, and the thickness of its walls, of the old monastery. Close by the door ascended a right angled modern staircase.

Lord Lossie entered, and took his seat in a great chair in one of the recesses.

"So, you young jackanapes!" he said, half angry, and half amused, "you decline to come, when I send for you, without a magistrate's warrant, forsooth! It looks bad to begin with, I must say!"

"Yer lordship wad never hae had me come at sic a summons as that cankert ted (toad) Johnny Bykes broucht me. Gien ye had but hard him! He spak as gien he had been sent to fess me to yer lordship by the scruff o' the neck, an' I didna believe yer lordship wad do sic a thing. Ony gait, I wasna gauin' to stan' that. Ye wad hae thocht him a cornel at the sma'est, an' me a wheen heerin' guts. But it wad hae garred ye lauch, my lord, to see hoo the body ran whan my blin' gran'father—he canna bide onybody interferin' wi' me—made at him wi' his braid swoord!"

"Ye leein' rascal!" cried Bykes; "—me feared at an auld spidder, 'at hasna breath eneuch to fill the bag o' 's pipes!"

"Caw canny, Johnny Bykes. Gien ye say an ill word o' my gran'father, I s' gie your neck a thraw —an' that the meenute we 're oot o' 's lordship's presence."

"Threits! my lord," said the gatekeeper, appealing.

"And well merited," returned his lordship. "—Well, then," he went on, again addressing Malcolm, "What have you to say for yourself in regard of stealing my brood pheasants?"

"Maister MacPherson," said Malcolm, with an inclination of his head towards the gamekeeper, "micht ha' fun' a fitter neuk to fling that dirt intill. 'Deed, my lord, it 's sae ridic'lous, it hardly angers me. A man 'at can hae a' the fish i' the haill ocean for the takin' o' them, to be sic a sneck drawin' contemptible wratch as tak yer lordship's bonny hen craturs frae their chuckies—no to mention the sin o't!—it 's past an honest man's denyin', my lord. An' Maister MacPherson kens better, for luik at him lauchin' in 's ain sleeve."

"Well, we've no proof of it," said the marquis; "but what do you say to the charge of trespass?"

"The policies hae aye been open to honest fowk, my lord."

"Then where was the necessity for getting in over the wall!"

"I beg yer pardon, my lord: ye hae nae proof agen me o' that aither."

"Daur ye tell me," cried Bykes, recovering himself, "'at I didna see ye wi' my twa een, loup the dyke aneth the temple—ay, an something flutterin' unco like bird wings i' yer han'?"

"Oot or in, Johnny Bykes?"

"Ow! oot."

"I did loup the dyke my lord; but it was oot, no in."

"How did you get in then?" asked the marquis.

"I gat in, my lord," began Malcolm, and ceased.

"How did you get in?" repeated the marquis.

"Ow! there's mony w'ys o' winnin' in, my lord. The last time I cam in but ane, it was 'maist ower the carcass o' Johnny there, wha wad fain hae hauden me oot, only he hadna my blin' daddy ahint him to ile 's jints."

"An' dinna ye ca' that brakin' in?" said Bykes.

"Na; there was naething to brak, 'cep it had been your banes, Johnny; an' that wad hae been a peety—they're sae guid for rinnin wi'."

"You had no right to enter against the will of my gatekeeper," said his lordship. "What is a gatekeeper for?"

"I had a richt, my lord, sae lang 's I was upo' my leddy's business."

"And what was my lady's business, pray?" questioned the marquis.

"I faun' a buik upo' the links, my lord, which was like to be hers, wi' the twa beasts 'at stans at yer lordship's door inside the brod (board) o' 't. An' sae it turned oot to be whan I took it up to the Hoose. There's the half croon she gae me."

Little did Malcolm think where the daintiest of pearly ears were listening, and the brightest of blue eyes looking down, half in merriment, a quarter in anxiety, and the remaining quarter in interest! On a landing half way up the stair, stood Lady Florimel, peeping over the balusters, afraid to fix her eyes upon him lest she should make him look up.

"Yes, yes, I daresay!" acquiesced the marquis; "but," he persisted, "what I want to know is, how you got in that time. You seem to have some reluctance to answer the question."

"Weel, I hey, my lord."

"Then I must insist on your doing so."

"Weel, I jist winna, my lord. It was a' straucht foret an' fair; an' gien yer lordship war i' my place, ye wadna say mair yersel'."

"He's been after one of the girls about the place," whispered the marquis to the gamekeeper.

"Speir at him, my lord, gien 't please yer lordship, what it was he hed in 's han' whan he lap the park wa'," said Bykes.

"Gien 't be a' ane till 's lordship," said Malcolm, without looking at Bykes, "it wad be better no to speir, for it gangs sair agen me to refeese him."

"I should like to know," said the marquis.

"Ye maun trust me, my lord, that I was efter no ill. I gie ye my word for that, my lord."

"But how am I to know what your word is worth?" returned Lord Lossie, well pleased with the dignity of the youth's behaviour.

"To ken what a body's word 's worth ye maun trust him first, my lord. It's no muckle trust I want o' ye: it comes but to this—that I hae rizzons, guid to me, an' no ill to you gien ye kent them, for not answerin' yer lordship's questions. no denyin' a word 'at Johnny Bykes says. I never hard the cratur ca'd a leear. He's but a cantankerous argle barglous body—no fit to be a gatekeeper 'cep it was up upo' the Binn side, whaur 'maist naebody gangs oot or in. He wad maybe be safter hertit till a fellow cratur syne."

"Would you have him let in all the tramps in the country?" said the marquis.

"De'il ane o' them, my Lord; but I wad hae him no trouble the likes o' me 'at fesses the fish to your lordship's brakwast: sic 's no like to be efter mischeef."

"There is some glimmer of sense in what you say," returned his lordship. "But you know it won't do to let anybody that pleases get over the park walls. Why didn't you go out at the gate?"

"The burn was atween me an' hit, an' it 's a lang road roon'."

"Well, I must lay some penalty upon you, to deter others," said the marquis.

"Verra well, my lord. Sae lang 's it 's fair, I s' bide it ohn grutten (without weeping)."

"It shan't be too hard. It's just this—to give John Bykes the thrashing he deserves, as soon as you're out of sight of the House."

"Na, na, my lord; I canna do that," said Malcolm.

"So you're afraid of him, after all!"

"Feared at Johnnie Bykes, my lord! Ha! ha!"

"You threatened him a minute ago, and now, when I give you leave to thrash him, you decline the honour!"

"The disgrace, my lord. He's an aulder man, an' no abune half the size. But fegs! gien he says anither word agen my gran'father, I will gin 's neck a bit thaw"

"Well, well, be off with you both," said the marquis rising.

No one heard the rustle of Lady Florimel's dress as she sped up the stair, thinking with herself how very odd it was to have a secret with a fisherman; for a secret it was, seeing the reticence of Malcolm had been a relief to her; when she shrunk from what seemed the imminent mention of her name in the affair before the servants. She had even felt a touch of mingled admiration and gratitude when she found what a faithful squire he was—capable of an absolute obstinacy indeed, where she was concerned. For her own sake as well as his she was glad that he had got off so well, for otherwise she would have felt bound to tell her father the whole story, and she was not at all so sure as Malcolm that he would have been satisfied with his reasons, and would not have been indignant with the fellow for presuming even to be silent concerning his daughter. Indeed Lady Florimel herself felt somewhat irritated with him, as having brought her into the awkward situation of sharing a secret with a youth of his position.

# CHAPTER XVIII: THE QUARREL

For a few days the weather was dull and unsettled, with cold flaws, and an occasional sprinkle of rain. But after came a still gray morning, warm and hopeful, and ere noon the sun broke out, the mists vanished, and the day was glorious in blue and gold. Malcolm had been to Scaurnose, to see his friend Joseph Mair, and was descending the steep path down the side of the promontory, on his way home, when his keen eye caught sight of a form on the slope of the dune which could hardly be other than that of Lady Florimel. She did not lift her eyes until he came quite near, and then only to drop them again with no more recognition than if he had been any other of the fishermen. Already more than half inclined to pick a quarrel with him, she fancied that, presuming upon their very commonplace adventure and its resulting secret, he approached her with an assurance he had never manifested before, and her head was bent motionless over her book when he stood and addressed her.

"My leddy," he began, with his bonnet by his knee.

"Well?" she returned, without even lifting her eyes, for, with the inherited privilege of her rank, she could be insolent with coolness, and call it to mind without remorse.

"I houp the bit buikie wasna muckle the waur, my leddy," he said.

"'Tis of no consequence," she replied.

"Gien it war mine, I wadna think sae," he returned, eyeing her anxiously. "—Here's yer leddyship's pocket nepkin," he went on. "I hae keepit it ready rowed up, ever sin' my daddy washed it oot. It's no ill dune for a blin' man, as ye'll see, an' I ironed it mysel' as weel's I cud."

As he spoke he unfolded a piece of brown paper, disclosing a little parcel in a cover of immaculate post, which he humbly offered her.

Taking it slowly from his hand, she laid it on the ground beside her with a stiff "thank you," and a second dropping of her eyes that seemed meant to close the interview.

"I doobt my company's no welcome the day, my leddy," said Malcolm with trembling voice; "but there's ae thing I maun refar till. Whan I took hame yer leddyship's buik the ither day, ye sent me half a croon by the han' o' yer servan' lass. Afore her I wasna gaein' to disalloo onything ye pleased wi' regaird to me; an' I thocht wi' mysel' it was maybe necessar' for yer leddyship's dignity an' the luik o' things—"

"How dare you hint at any understanding between you and me?" exclaimed the girl in cold anger.

"Lord, mem! what hey I said to fess sic a fire flaucht oot o' yer bonny een? I thocht ye only did it 'cause ye wad' na like to luik shabby afore the lass—no giein' onything to the lad 'at brocht ye yer ain—an' lippened to me to unnerstan' 'at ye did it but for the luik o' the thing, as I say."

He had taken the coin from his pocket, and had been busy while he spoke rubbing it in a handful of sand, so that it was bright as new when he now offered it.

"You are quite mistaken," she rejoined, ungraciously. "You insult me by supposing I meant you to return it."

"Div ye think I cud bide to be paid for a turn till a neebor, lat alane the liftin' o' a buik till a leddy?" said Malcolm with keen mortification. "That wad be to despise mysel' frae keel to truck. I like to be paid for my wark, an' I like to be paid weel: but no a plack by siclike (beyond such) sall stick to my loof (palm). It can be no offence to gie ye back yer half croon, my leddy."

And again he offered the coin.

"I don't in the least see why, on your own principles, you shouldn't take the money," said the girl, with more than the coldness of an uninterested umpire. "You worked for it, sure—first accompanying me home in such a storm, and then finding the book and bringing it back all the way to the house!"

"'Deed, my leddy, sic a doctrine wad tak a' grace oot o' the earth! What wad this life be worth gien a' was to be peyed for? I wad cut my throat afore I wad bide in sic a warl'.—Tak yer half croon, my leddy," he concluded, in a tone of entreaty.

But the energetic outburst was sufficing, in such her mood, only to the disgust of Lady Florimel.

"Do anything with the money you please; only go away, and don't plague me about it," she said freezingly.

"What can I du wi' what I wadna pass throu' my fingers?" said Malcolm with the patience of deep disappointment.

"Give it to some poor creature: you know some one who would be glad of it, I daresay."

"I ken mony ane, my leddy, wham it wad weel become yer am bonny han' to gie 't till; but no gaein' to tak' credit fer a leeberality that wad ill become me."

"You can tell how you earned it."

"And profess mysel' disgraced by takin' a reward frae a born leddy for what I wad hae dune for ony beggar wife i' the lan'. Na, na, my leddy."

"Your services are certainly flattering, when you put me on a level with any beggar in the country!"

"In regaird o' sic service, my leddy: ye ken weel eneuch what I mean. Obleege me by takin' back yer siller."

"How dare you ask me to take back what I once gave?"

"Ye cudna hae kent what ye was doin' whan ye gae 't, my leddy. Tak it back, an tak a hunnerweicht aff o' my hert."

He actually mentioned his heart!—was it to be borne by a girl in Lady Florimel's mood?

"I beg you will not annoy me," she said, muffling her anger in folds of distance, and again sought her book.

Malcolm looked at her for a moment, then turned his face towards the sea, and for another moment stood silent. Lady Florimel glanced up, but Malcolm was unaware of her movement. He lifted his hand, and looked at the half crown gleaming on his palm; then, with a sudden poise of his body, and a sudden fierce action of his arm, he sent the coin, swift with his heart's repudiation, across the sands into the tide. Ere it struck the water he had turned, and, with long stride but low bent head, walked away. A pang shot to Lady Florimel's heart. "Malcolm!" she cried.

He turned instantly, came slowly back, and stood erect and silent before her.

She must say something. Her eye fell on the little parcel beside her, and she spoke the first thought that came.

"Will you take this?" she said, and offered him the handkerchief.

In a dazed way he put out his hand and took it, staring at it as if he did not know what it was.

"It's some sair!" he said at length, with a motion of his hands as if to grasp his head between them. "Ye winna tak even the washin' o' a pocket nepkin frae me, an' ye wad gar me tak a haill half croon frae yersel'! Mem, ye're a gran' leddy an' a bonny; an ye hae turns aboot ye, gien 'twar but the set o' yer heid, 'at micht gar an angel lat fa' what he was carryin', but afore I wad affront ane that wantit naething o' me but gude will, I wad—I wad—raither be the fisher lad that I am."

A weak kneed peroration, truly; but Malcolm was over burdened at last. He laid the little parcel on the sand at her feet, almost reverentially, and again turned. But Lady Florimel spoke again.

"It is you who are affronting me now," she said gently. "When a lady gives her handkerchief to a gentleman, it is commonly received as a very great favour indeed."

"Gien I hae made a mistak, my leddy, I micht weel mak it, no bein' a gentleman, and no bein' used to the traitment o' ane. But I doobt gien a gentleman wad ha' surmised what ye was efter wi' yer nepkin', gien ye had offert him half a croon first."

"Oh, yes, he would—perfectly!" said Florimel with an air of offence.

"Then, my leddy, for the first time i' my life, I wish I had been born a gentleman."

"Then I certainly wouldn't have given it you," said Florimel with perversity.

"What for no, my leddy? I dinna unnerstan' ye again. There maun be an unco differ atween 's!"

"Because a gentleman would have presumed on such a favour."

" glaidder nor ever 'at I wasna born ane," said Malcolm, and, slowly stooping, he lifted the handkerchief; "an' I was aye glaid o' that, my leddy, 'cause gien I had been, I wad hae been luikin' doon upo' workin' men like mysel' as gien they warna freely o' the same flesh an' blude. But I beg yer leddyship's pardon for takin' ye up amiss. An' sae lang's I live, I'll regaird this as ane o' her fedders 'at the angel moutit as she sat by the bored craig. An' whan deid, I'll hae 't laid upo' my face, an' syne, maybe, I may get a sicht o' ye as I pass. Guid day my leddy."

"Good day," she returned kindly. "I wish my father would let me have a row in your boat."

"It's at yer service whan ye please, my leddy," said Malcolm.

One who had caught a glimpse of the shining yet solemn eyes of the youth, as he walked home, would wonder no longer that he should talk as he did—so sedately, yet so poetically—so long windedly, if you like, yet so sensibly—even wisely.

Lady Florimel lay on the sand, and sought again to read the "Faerie Queene." But for the last day or two she had been getting tired of it, and now the forms that entered by her eyes dropped half their substance and all their sense in the porch, and thronged her brain with the mere phantoms of things, with words that came and went and were nothing. Abandoning the harvest of chaff, her eyes rose and looked out upon the sea. Never, even from tropical shore, was richer hued ocean beheld. Gorgeous in purple and green, in shadowy blue and flashing gold, it seemed to Malcolm, as if at any moment the ever newborn Anadyomene might lift her shining head from the wandering floor, and float away in her pearly lustre to gladden the regions where the glaciers glide seawards in irresistible silence, there to give birth to the icebergs in tumult and thunderous uproar. But Lady Florimel felt merely the loneliness. One deserted boat lay on the long sand, like the bereft and useless half of a double shell. Without show of life the moveless cliffs lengthened far into a sea where neither white sail deepened the purple and gold, nor red one enriched it with a colour it could not itself produce. Neither hope nor aspiration awoke in her heart at the sight. Was she beginning to be tired of her companionless liberty? Had the long stanzas, bound by so many interwoven links of rhyme, ending in long Alexandrines, the long cantos, the lingering sweetness long drawn out through so many unended books, begun to weary her at last? Had even a quarrel with a fisher lad been a little pastime to her? and did she now wish she had detained him a little longer? Could she take any interest in him beyond such as she took in Demon, her father's dog, or Brazenose, his favourite horse?

Whatever might be her thoughts or feelings at this moment, it remained a fact, that Florimel Colonsay, the daughter of a marquis, and Malcolm, the grandson of a blind piper, were woman and man—and the man the finer of the two this time.

As Malcolm passed on his way one of the three or four solitary rocks which rose from the sand, the skeleton remnants of larger masses worn down by wind, wave, and weather, he heard his own name uttered by an unpleasant voice, and followed by a more unpleasant laugh.

He knew both the voice and the laugh, and, turning, saw Mrs Catanach, seated, apparently busy with her knitting, in the shade of the rock.

"Weel?" he said curtly.

"Weel!—Set ye up!—Wha's yon ye was play actin' wi' oot yonner?"

"Wha telled ye to speir, Mistress Catanach?"

"Ay, ay, laad! Ye'll be abune speykin' till an auld wife efter colloguin' wi' a yoong ane, an' sic a ane! Isna she bonny, Malkie? Isna hers a winsome shape an' a lauchin' ee? Didna she draw ye on, an' luik i' the hawk's een o' ye, an' lay herself oot afore ye, an' ?"

"She did naething o' the sort, ye ill tongued wuman!" said Malcolm in anger.

"Ho! ho!" trumpeted Mrs Catanach. "Ill tongued, am I? An' what neist?"

"Ill deedit," returned Malcolm, "—whan ye flang my bonny salmon troot till yer oogly deevil o' a dog."

"Ho! ho! ho! Ill deedit, am I? I s' no forget thae bonny names! Maybe yer lordship wad alloo me the leeberty o' speirin' anither question at ye, Ma'colm MacPhail."

"Ye may speir 'at ye like, sae lang 's ye canna gar me stan' to hearken. Guid day to ye, Mistress Catanach. Yer company was nane o' my seekin': I may lea' 't whan I like."

"Dinna ye be ower sure o' that," she called after him venomously.

But Malcolm turned his head no more.

As soon as he was out of sight, Mrs Catanach rose, ascended the dune, and propelled her rotundity along the yielding top of it. When she arrived within speaking distance of Lady Florimel, who lay lost in her dreary regard of sand and sea, she paused for a moment, as if contemplating her.

Suddenly, almost by Lady Florimel's side, as if he had risen from the sand, stood the form of the mad laird.

"I dinna ken whaur I come frae," he said.

Lady Florimel started, half rose, and seeing the dwarf so near, and on the other side of her a repulsive looking woman staring at her, sprung to her feet and fled. The same instant the mad laird, catching sight of Mrs Catanach, gave a cry of misery, thrust his fingers in his ears, darted down the other side of the dune and sped along the shore. Mrs. Catanach shook with laughter.

"I hae skailled (dispersed) the bonny doos!" she said. Then she called aloud after the flying girl,—"My leddy! My bonny leddy!"

Florimel paid no heed, but ran straight for the door of the tunnel, and vanished. Thence leisurely climbing to the temple of the winds, she looked down from a height of safety upon the shore and the retreating figure of Mrs. Catanach. Seating herself by the pedestal of the trumpet blowing Wind, she assayed her reading again, but was again startled—this time by a rough salute from Demon. Presently her father appeared, and Lady Florimel felt something like a pang of relief at being found there, and not on the farther side of the dune making it up with Malcolm.

# CHAPTER XIX: DUNCAN'S PIPES

A few days after the events last narrated, a footman in the marquis's livery entered the Seaton, snuffing with emphasized discomposure the air of the village, all ignorant of the risk he ran in thus openly manifesting his feelings; for the women at least were good enough citizens to resent any indignity offered their town. As vengeance would have it, Meg Partan was the first of whom, with supercilious airs and "clippit" tongue, he requested to know where a certain blind man, who played on an instrument called the bagpipes, lived.

"Spit i' yer loof an' caw (search) for him," she answered—a reply of which he understood the tone and one disagreeable word.

With reddening cheek he informed her that he came on his lord's business.

"I dinna doobt it," she retorted; "ye luik siclike as rins ither fowk's eeran's."

"I should be obliged if you would inform me where the man lives," returned the lackey—with polite words in supercilious tones.

"What d' ye want wi' him, honest man?" grimly questioned the Partaness, the epithet referring to Duncan, and not the questioner.

"That 1 shall have the honour of informing himself," he replied.

"Weel, ye can hae the honour o' informin' yersel' whaur he bides," she rejoined, and turned away from her open door.

All were not so rude as she, however, for he found at length a little girl willing to show him the way.

The style in which his message was delivered was probably modified by the fact that he found Malcolm seated with his grandfather at their evening meal of water brose and butter; for he had been present when Malcolm was brought before the marquis by Bykes, and had in some measure comprehended the nature of the youth: it was in politest phrase, and therefore entirely to Duncan's satisfaction in regard of the manner as well as matter of the message, that he requested Mr Duncan MacPhail's attendance on the marquis the following evening at six o'clock, to give his lordship and some distinguished visitors the pleasure of hearing him play on the bagpipes during dessert. To this summons the old man returned stately and courteous reply, couched in the best English he could command; which, although considerably distorted by Gaelic pronunciation and idioms, was yet sufficiently intelligible to the messenger, who carried home the substance for the satisfaction of his master, and what he could of the form for the amusement of his fellow servants.

Duncan, although he received it with perfect calmness, was yet overjoyed at the invitation. He had performed once or twice before the late marquis, and having ever since assumed the style of Piper to the Marquis of Lossie, now regarded the summons as confirmation in the office. The moment the sound of the messenger's departing footsteps died away, he caught up his pipes from the corner, where, like a pet cat, they lay on a bit of carpet, the only piece in the cottage, spread for them between his chair and the wall, and, though cautiously mindful of its age and proved infirmity, filled the bag full, and burst into such a triumphant onset of battle, that all the children of the Seaton were in a few minutes crowded about the door. He had not played above five minutes, however, when the love of finery natural to the Gael, the Gaul, the Galatian, triumphed over his love of music, and he stopped with an abrupt groan of the instrument to request Malcolm to get him new streamers. Whatever his notions of its nature might be, he could not come of the Celtic race without having in him somewhere a strong faculty for colour, and no doubt his fancy regarding it was of something as glorious as his knowledge of it must have been vague. At all events he not only knew the names of the colours in ordinary use, but could describe many of the clan tartans with perfect accuracy; and he now gave Malcolm complete instructions as to the hues of the ribbons he was to purchase. As soon as he had started on the important mission, the old man laid aside his instrument, and taking his

broadsword from the wall, proceeded with the aid of brick dust and lamp oil, to furbish hilt and blade with the utmost care, searching out spot after spot of rust, to the smallest, with the delicate points of his great bony fingers. Satisfied at length of its brightness, he requested Malcolm, who had returned long before the operation was over, to bring him the sheath, which, for fear of its coming to pieces, so old and crumbling was the leather, he kept laid up in the drawer with his sporran and his Sunday coat. His next business, for he would not commit it to Malcolm, was to adorn the pipes with the new streamers. Asking the colour of each, and going by some principle of arrangement known only to himself he affixed them, one after the other, as he judged right, shaking and drawing out each to its full length with as much pride as if it had been a tone instead of a ribbon. This done, he resumed his playing, and continued it, notwithstanding the remonstrances of his grandson, until bedtime.

That night he slept but little, and as the day went on grew more and more excited. Scarcely had he swallowed his twelve o'clock dinner of sowens and oatcake, when he wanted to go and dress himself for his approaching visit. Malcolm persuaded him however to lie down a while and hear him play, and succeeded, strange as it may seem with such an instrument, in lulling him to sleep. But he had not slept more than five minutes when he sprung from the bed, wide awake, crying—"My poy, Malcolm! my son! you haf let her sleep in; and ta creat peoples will be impatient for her music, and cursing her in teir hearts!"

Nothing would quiet him but the immediate commencement of the process of dressing, the result of which was, as I have said, even pathetic, from its intermixture of shabbiness and finery. The dangling brass capped tails of his sporran in front, the silver mounted dirk on one side, with its hilt of black oak carved into an eagle's head, and the steel basket of his broadsword gleaming at the other; his great shoulder brooch of rudely chased brass; the pipes with their withered bag and gaudy streamers; the faded kilt, oiled and soiled; the stockings darned in twenty places by the hands of the termagant Meg Partan; the brogues patched and patched until it would have been hard to tell a spot of the original leather; the round blue bonnet grown gray with wind and weather: the belts that looked like old harness ready to yield at a pull; his skene dhu sticking out grim and black beside a knee like a lean knuckle:—all combined to form a picture ludicrous to a vulgar nature, but gently pitiful to the lover of his kind, he looked like a half mouldered warrior, waked from beneath an ancient cairn, to walk about in a world other than he took it to be. Malcolm, in his commonplace Sunday suit, served as a foil to his picturesque grandfather; to whose oft reiterated desire that he would wear the highland dress, he had hitherto returned no other answer than a humorous representation of the different remarks with which the neighbours would encounter such a solecism.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.