

SIR HALL CAINE

THE BONDMAN: A NEW
SAGA

Hall Caine

The Bondman: A New Saga

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The Bondman: A New Saga

To My Son

"Little Sunlocks."

Note

The central date of this story (a Saga in the only sense accepted among Icelanders) is 1800, when Iceland, in the same year as Ireland, lost the last visible sign of her ancient independence as a nation. But, lest the historical incidents that stand as a background to simple human passions should seem to clash at some points, I hasten to say that I have not thought it wise to bind myself to the strict chronology of history, Manx or Icelandic, for some years before and after. I am partly conscious that the Iceland I have described is the Iceland of an earlier era; but Icelanders will not object to my having tried to bring within my too narrow limits much of what is beautiful and noble and firing to enthusiasm in their old habits, customs and laws. To the foolish revolt which occurred at Reykjavik early in this century I have tried to give the dignity of a serious revolution such as, I truly think, Icelanders may yet make in order to become masters in their own house. For a great deal of my data towards this sort of secondary interest I am indebted to many books, Icelandic and English; and for some personal help I owe my thanks to Herra Jon A. Hjaltalin of Modruvellir, who is not, however, to be charged with my mistakes – too numerous I have no doubt. For my descriptions of Icelandic scenes and character I can claim no authority but that of my own observation.

H. C.

Hawthorns,
Keswick.

The Bondman

"Vengeance is mine – I will repay."

Proem

There is a beautiful Northern legend of a man who loved a good fairy, and wooed her and won her for his wife, and then found that she was no more than a woman after all. Grown weary, he turned his back upon her and wandered away over the mountains; and there, on the other side of a ravine from where he was, he saw, as he thought, another fairy, who was lovely to look upon and played sweet music and sang a sweet song. Then his heart was filled with joy and bitterness, and he cried, "Oh, that the gods had given me this one to wife and not the other." At that, with mighty effort and in great peril, he crossed the ravine and made towards the fairy, and she fled from him; but he ran and followed her and overtook her, and captured her and turned her face to his face that he might kiss her, and lo! *she was his wife!*

This old folk-tale is half my story – the play of emotions as sweet and light as the footsteps of the shadows that flit over a field of corn.

There is another Northern legend of a man who thought he was pursued by a troll. His ricks were fired, his barns unroofed, his cattle destroyed, his lands blasted, and his firstborn slain. So he lay in wait for the monster where it lived in the chasms near his house, and in the darkness of night he saw it. With a cry he rushed upon it, and gripped it about the waist, and it turned upon him and held him by the shoulder. Long he wrestled with it, reeling, staggering, falling and rising again; but at length a flood of strength came to him and he overthrew it, and stood over it, covering it, conquering it, with his back across his thigh and his right hand set hard at its throat. Then he drew his knife to kill it, and the moon shot through a rack of cloud, opening an alley of light about it, and he saw its face, and lo! *the face of the troll was his own!*

This is the other half of my story – the crash of passions as bracing as a black thunderstorm.

CHAPTER I.

Stephen Orry, Seaman, of Stappen

In the latter years of last century, H. Jorgen Jorgensen was Governor-General of Iceland. He was a Dane, born in Copenhagen, apprenticed to the sea on board an English trader, afterwards employed as a petty officer in the British navy, and some time in the command of a Danish privateer in an Alliance of Denmark and France against England. A rover, a schemer, a shrewd man of affairs, who was honest by way of interest, just by policy, generous by strategy, and who never suffered his conscience, which was not a good one, to get the better of him.

In one of his adventures he had sailed a Welsh brig from Liverpool to Reykjavik. This had been his introduction to the Icelandic capital, then a little, hungry, creeping settlement, with its face towards America and its wooden feet in the sea. It had also been his introduction to the household of the Welsh merchant, who had a wharf by the old Canning basin at Liverpool, a counting-house behind his residence in Wolstenholme Square, and a daughter of five and twenty. Jorgen, by his own proposal, was to barter English produce for Icelandic tallow. On his first voyage he took out a hundred tons of salt, and brought back a heavy cargo of lava for ballast. On his second voyage he took out the Welshman's daughter as his wife, and did not again trouble to send home an empty ship.

He had learned that mischief was once more brewing between England and Denmark, had violated his English letters of marque and run into Copenhagen, induced the authorities there, on the strength of his knowledge of English affairs, to appoint him to the Governor-Generalship of Iceland (then vacant) at a salary of four hundred pounds a year, and landed at Reykjavik with the Icelandic flag, of the white falcon on the blue ground – the banner of the Vikings – at the masthead of his father-in-law's Welsh brig.

Jorgen Jorgensen was then in his early manhood, and the strong heart of the good man did not decline with years, but rode it out with him through life and death. He had always intended to have a son and build up a family. It was the sole failure of his career that he had only a daughter. That had been a disaster for which he was not accountable, but he prepared himself to make a good end of a bad beginning. With God's assistance and his own extreme labor he meant to marry his daughter to Count Trollop, the Danish minister for Iceland, a functionary with five hundred a year, a house at Reykjavik, and another at the Danish capital.

This person was five-and-forty, tall, wrinkled, powdered, oiled, and devoted to gallantry. Jorgen's daughter, resembling her Welsh mother, was patient in suffering, passionate in love, and fierce in hatred. Her name was Rachel. At the advent of Count Trollop she was twenty, and her mother had then been some years dead.

The Count perceived Jorgen's drift, smiled at it, silently acquiesced in it, took even a languid interest in it, arising partly out of the Governor's position and the wealth the honest man was supposed to have amassed in the rigorous exercise of a place of power, and partly out of the daughter's own comeliness, which was not to be despised. At first the girl, on her part, neither assisted her father's designs nor resisted them, but showed complete indifference to the weighty questions of whom she should marry, when she should marry, and how she should marry; and this mood of mind contented her down to the last week in June that followed the anniversary of her twenty-first birthday.

That was the month of Althing, the national holiday of fourteen days, when the people's law-givers – the Governor, the Bishop, the Speaker, and the Sheriffs – met the people's delegates and some portion of the people themselves at the ancient Mount of Laws in the valley of Thingvellir, for the reading of the old statutes and the promulgation of the new ones, for the trial of felons and the settlement of claims, for the making of love and the making of quarrels, for wrestling and horse-fighting, for the practice of arms and the breaking of heads. Count Trollop was in Iceland at this celebration of the ancient festival, and he was induced by Jorgen to give it the light of his countenance.

The Governor's company set out on half-a-hundred of the native ponies, and his daughter rode between himself and the Count. During that ride of six or seven long Danish miles Jorgen settled the terms of the intended transfer to his own complete contentment. The Count acquiesced and the daughter did not rebel.

The lonely valley was reached, the tents were pitched, the Bishop hallowed the assembly with solemn ceremonies, and the business of Althing began. Three days the work went on, and Rachel wearied of it; but on the fourth the wrestling was started, and her father sent for her to sit with him on the Mount and to present at the end of the contest the silver-buckled belt to the champion of all Iceland. She obeyed the summons with indifference, and took a seat beside the Judge, with the Count standing at her side. In the space below there was a crowd of men and boys, women and children, gathered about the ring. One wrestler was throwing everyone that came before him. His name was Patrickson, and he was supposed to be descended from the Irish, who settled, ages ago, on the Westmann Islands. His success became monotonous; at every fresh bout his self-confidence grew more insufferable, and the girl's eyes wandered from the spectacle to the spectators. From that instant her indifference fell away.

By the outskirts of the crowd, on one of the lower mounds of the Mount of Laws, a man sat with his head in his hand, with elbow on his knee. His head was bare, and from his hairy breast his woolen shirt was thrown back by reason of the heat. He was a magnificent creature – young, stalwart, fair-haired, broad-chested, with limbs like the beech tree, and muscles like its great gnarled round heads. His coat, a sort of sailor's jacket, was coarse and torn; his stockings, reaching to his knees, were cut and brown. He did not seem to heed the wrestling, and there rested upon him the idle air of the lusty Iclander – the languor of the big, tired animal. Only, when at the close of a bout a cheer rose and a way was made through the crowd for the exit of the vanquished man, did he lift up his great slow eyes – gray as those of a seal, and as calm and lustreless.

The wrestling came to an end. Patrickson justified his Irish blood, was proclaimed the winner, and stepped up to the foot of the Mount that the daughter of the Governor might buckle about him his champion's belt. The girl went through her function listlessly, her eyes wandering to where the fair-haired giant sat apart. Then the Westmann islander called for drink that he might treat the losing men, and having drunk himself, he began to swagger afresh, saying that they might find him the strongest and lustiest man that day at Thingvellir, and he would bargain to throw him over his back. As he spoke he strutted by the bottom of the Mount, and the man who sat there lifted his head and looked at him. Something in the glance arrested Patrickson and he stopped.

"This seems to be a lump of a lad," he said. "Let us see what we can do with him."

And at that he threw his long arms about the stalwart fellow, squared his broad hips before him, thrust down his head into his breast until his red neck was as thick as a bullock's, and threw all the strength of his body into his arms that he might lift the man out of his seat. But he moved him not an inch. With feet that held the earth like the hoofs of an ox, the young man sat unmoved.

Then those who had followed at the islander's heels for the liquor he was spending first stared in wonderment at his failure, and next laughed in derision of his bragging, and shouted to know why, before it was too late, the young man had not taken a bout at the wrestling, for that he who could hold his seat so must be the strongest-limbed man between the fells and the sea. Hearing this Patrickson tossed his head in anger, and said it was not yet too late, that if he took home the champion's belt it should be no rude bargain to master or man from sea to sea, and buckled though it was, it should be his who could take it from its place.

At that word the young fellow rose, and then it was seen that his right arm was useless, being broken between the elbow and the wrist, and bound with a kerchief above the wound. Nothing loth for this infirmity, he threw his other arm about the waist of the islander, and the two men closed for a fall. Patrickson had the first grip, and he swung to it, thinking straightway to lay his adversary by the heels; but the young man held his feet, and then, pushing one leg between the legs of the islander,

planting the other knee into the islander's stomach, thrusting his head beneath the islander's chin, he knuckled his left hand under the islander's rib, pulled towards him, pushed from him, threw the weight of his body forward, and like a green withe Patrickksen doubled backwards with a groan. Then at a rush of the islander's kinsmen, and a cry that his back would be broken, young man loosed his grip, and Patrickksen rolled from him to the earth, as a clod rolls from the ploughshare.

All this time Jorgen's daughter had craned her neck to see over the heads of the people, and when the tussle was at an end, her face, which had been strained to the point of anguish, relaxed to smiles, and she turned to her father and asked if the champion's belt should not be his who had overcome the champion. But Jorgen answered no – that the contest was done, and judgment made, and he who would take the champion's belt must come to the next Althing and earn it. Then the girl unlocked her necklace of coral and silver spangles, beckoned the young man to her, bound the necklace about his broken arm close up by the shoulder, and asked him his name.

"Stephen," he answered.

"Whose son?" said she.

"Orrysen – but they call me Stephen Orry."

"Of what craft?"

"Seaman, of Stappen, under Snaefell."

The Westmann islander had rolled to his legs by this time, and now he came shambling up, with the belt in his hand and his sullen eyes on the ground.

"Keep it," he said, and flung the belt at the girl's feet, between her and his adversary. Then he strode away through the people, with curses on his white lips and the veins of his squat forehead large and dark.

It was midnight before the crowds had broken up and straggled away to their tents, but the sun of this northern land was still half over the horizon, and its dull red glow was on the waters of the lake that lay to the west of the valley. In the dim light of an hour later, when the hills of Thingvellir slept under the cloud shadow that was their only night, Stephen Orry stood with the Governor's daughter by the door of the Thingvellir parsonage, for Jorgen's company were the parson's guests. He held out the champion's belt to her and said, "Take it back, for if I keep it the man and his kinsmen will follow me all the days of my life."

She answered him that it was his, for he had won it, and until it was taken from him he must hold it, and if he stood in peril from the kinsmen of any man let him remember that it was she, daughter of the Governor himself, who had given it. The air was hushed in that still hour, not a twig or a blade rustling over the serried face of that desolate land as far as the wooded rifts that stood under the snowy dome of the Armann fells. As she spoke there was a sharp noise near at hand, and he started; but she rallied him on his fears, and laughed that one who had felled the blustering champion of that day should tremble at a noise in the night.

There was a wild outcry in Thingvellir the next morning, Patrickksen, the Westmann islander, had been murdered. There was a rush of the people to the place where his body had been found. It lay like a rag across the dyke that ran between the parsonage and the church. On the dead man's face was the look that all had seen there when last night he flung down the belt between his adversary and the Governor's daughter, crying, "keep it." But his sullen eyes were glazed, and stared up without the quivering of a lid through the rosy sunlight; the dark veins on his brow were now purple, and when they lifted him they saw that his back was broken.

Then there was a gathering at the foot of the Mount, with the parson for judge, and nine men of those who had slept in the tents nearest to the body for witnesses and jury. Nothing was discovered. No one had heard a sound throughout the night. There was no charge to put before the law-givers at Althing. The kinsmen of the dead man cast dark looks at Stephen Orry, but he gave never a sign. Next day the strong man was laid under the shallow turf of the Church garth. His little life's swaggering was swaggered out; he must sleep on to the resurrection without one brag more.

The Governor's daughter did not leave the guest room of the parsonage from the night of the wrestling onwards to the last morning of the Althing holiday, and then, the last ceremonies done, the tents struck and the ponies saddled, she took her place between Jorgen and the Count for the return journey home. Twenty paces behind her the fair-haired Stephen Orry rode on his shaggy pony, gaunt and peaky and bearded as a goat, and five paces behind him rode the brother of the dead man Patrickson. Amid five hundred men and women, and eight hundred horses saddled for riding or packed with burdens, these three had set their faces towards the little wooden capital.

July passed into August, and the day was near that had been appointed by Jorgen Jorgensen for the marriage of his daughter to the Count Trollop. At the girl's request the marriage was postponed. The second day came nigh; again the girl excused herself, and again the marriage was put off. A third time the appointed day approached, and a third time the girl asked for delay. But Jorgen's iron will was to be tampered with no longer. The time was near when the Minister must return to Copenhagen, and that was reason enough why the thing in hand should be despatched. The marriage must be delayed no longer.

But then the Count betrayed reluctance. Rumor had pestered him with reports that vexed his pride. He dropped hints of them to the Governor. "Strange," said he, "that a woman should prefer the stink of the fulmar fish to the perfumes of civilization." Jorgen fired up at the sneer. His daughter was his daughter, and he was Governor-General of the island. What lowborn churl would dare to lift his eyes to the child of Jorgen Jorgensen?

The Count had his answer pat. He had made inquiries. The man's name was Stephen Orry. He came from Stappen under Snaefell, and was known there for a wastrel. On the poor glory of his village voyage as an athlete, he idled his days in bed and his nights at the tavern. His father, an honest thrall, was dead; his mother lived by splitting and drying the stock-fish for English traders. He was the foolish old woman's pride, and she kept him. Such was the man whom the daughter of the Governor had chosen before the Minister for Iceland.

At that Jorgen's hard face grew livid and white by turns. They were sitting at supper in Government House, and, with an oath, the Governor brought his fist down on the table. It was a lie; his daughter knew no more of the man than he did. The Count shrugged his shoulders and asked where she was then, that she was not with them. Jorgen answered, with an absent look, that she was forced to keep her room.

At that moment a message came for the Count. It was urgent and could not wait. The Count went to the door, and, returning presently, asked if Jorgen was sure that his daughter was in the house. Certain of it he was, for she was ill, and the days were deepening to winter. But for all his assurance, Jorgen sprang up from his seat and made for his daughter's chamber. She was not there, and the room was empty. The Count met him in the corridor. "Follow me," he whispered, and Jorgen followed, his proud, stern head bent low.

In the rear of the Government House at Reykjavik there is a small meadow. That night it was inches deep in the year's first fall of snow, but two persons stood together there, close locked in each other's arms – Stephen Orry and the daughter of Jorgen Jorgensen. With the tread of a cat a man crept up behind them. It was the brother of Patrickson. At his back came the Count and the Governor. The snow cloud lifted, and a white gush of moonlight showed all. With the cry of a wild beast Jorgen flung himself between his daughter and her lover, leapt at Stephen and struck him hard on the breast, and then, as the girl dropped to her knees at his feet, he cursed her.

"Bastard," he shrieked, "there's no blood of mine in your body. Go to your filthy offal, and may the devil damn you both."

She stopped her ears to shut out the torrent of a father's curse, but before the flood of it was spent she fell backward cold and senseless, and her upturned face was whiter than the snow. Then her giant lover lifted her in his arms as if she had been a child, and strode away in silence.

CHAPTER II.

The Mother of a Man

The daughter of the Governor-General and the seaman of Stappen were made man and wife. The little Lutheran priest, who married them, Sigfus Thomson, a worthy man and a good Christian, had reason to remember the ceremony. Within a week he was removed from his chaplaincy at the capital to the rectory of Grimsey, the smallest cure of the Icelandic Church, on an island separated from the mainland by seven Danish miles of sea.

The days that followed brought Rachel no cheer of life. She had thought that her husband would take her away to his home under Snaefell, and so remove her from the scene of her humiliation. He excused himself, saying that Stappen was but a poor place, where the great ships never put in to trade, and that there was more chance of livelihood at Reykjavik. Rachel crushed down her shame, and they took a mean little house in the fishing quarter. But Stephen did no work. Once he went out four days with a company of Englishmen as guide to the geysers, and on his return he idled four weeks on the wharves, looking at the foreign seamen as they arrived by the boats. The fame of his exploit at Thingvellir had brought him a troop of admirers, and what he wanted for his pleasure he never lacked. But necessity began to touch him at home, and then he hinted to Rachel that her father was rich. She had borne his indifference to her degradation, she had not murmured at the idleness that pinched them, but at that word something in her heart seemed to break. She bent her head and said nothing. He went on to hint that she should go to her father, who seeing her need would surely forgive her. Then her proud spirit could brook no more. "Rather than darken my father's doors again," she said, "I will starve on a crust of bread and a drop of water."

Things did not mend, and Stephen began to cast down his eyes in shame when Rachel looked at him. Never a word of blame she spoke, but he reproached himself and talked of his old mother at Stappen. She was the only one who could do any good with him. She knew him and did not spare him. When she was near he worked sometimes, and did not drink too much. He must send for her.

Rachel raised no obstacle, and one day the old mother came, perched upon a bony, ragged-eared pony, and with all her belongings on the pack behind her. She was a little, hard featured woman; and at the first sight of her seamed and blotted face Rachel's spirit sank.

The old woman was active and restless. Two days after her arrival she was at work at her old trade of splitting and drying the stock-fish. All the difference that the change had made for her was that she was working on the beach at Reykjavik instead of the beach at Stappen, and living with her son and her son's wife instead of alone.

Her coming did not better the condition of Rachel. She had measured her new daughter-in-law from head to foot at their first meeting, and neither smiled nor kissed her. She was devoted to her son, and no woman was too good for him. Her son had loved her, and Rachel had come between them. The old woman made up her mind to hate the girl, because her fine manners and comely face were a daily rebuke to her own coarse habits and homely looks, and an hourly contrast always present to Stephen's eyes.

Stephen was as idle as ever, and less ashamed of his sloth now that there was someone to keep the wolf from the door. His mother accepted with cheerfulness the duty of bread-winner to her son, but Rachel's helplessness chafed her. For all her fine fingering the girl could finger nothing that would fill the pot. "A pretty wife you've brought me home to keep," she muttered morning and night.

But Rachel's abasement was not even yet at its worst. "Oh," she thought, "if I could but get back my husband to myself alone, he would see my humiliation and save me from it." She went a woman's way to work to have the old mother sent home to Stappen. But the trick that woman's wit can devise woman's wit can baulk, and the old mother held her ground. Then the girl bethought her of her old shame at living in a hovel close to her father's house, and asked to be taken away. Anywhere,

anywhere, let it be to the world's end, and she would follow. Stephen answered that one place was like another in Iceland, where the people were few and all knew their history; and, as for foreign parts, though a seaman he was not a seagoing man, farther than the whale-fishing lay about their coasts, and that, go where they might to better their condition, yet other poor men were there already. At that, Rachel's heart sank, for she saw that the great body of her husband must cover a pigmy soul. Bound she was for all her weary days to the place of her disgrace, doomed she was to live to the last with the woman who hated her, and to eat that woman's bitter bread. She was heavy with child at this time, and her spirit was broken. So she sat herself down with her feet to the hearth, and wept.

There the old mother saw her as often as she bustled in and out of the house from the beach, and many a gibe she flung her way. But Stephen sat beside her one day with a shame-faced look, and cursed his luck, and said if he only had an open boat of his own what he would do for both of them. She asked how much a boat would cost him, and he answered sixty kroner; that a Scotch captain then in the harbor had such a one to sell at that price, and that it was a better boat than the fishermen of those parts ever owned, for it was of English build. Now it chanced that sitting alone that very day in her hopelessness, Rachel had overheard a group of noisy young girls in the street tell of a certain Jew, named Bernard Frank, who stood on the jetty by the stores buying hair of the young maidens who would sell to him, and of the great money he had paid to some of them, such as they had never handled before.

And now, at this mention of the boat, and at the flash of hope that came with it, Rachel remembered that she herself had a plentiful head of hair, and how often it had been commended for its color and texture, and length and abundance, in the days (now gone forever) when all things were good and beautiful that belonged to the daughter of the Governor. So, making some excuse to Stephen, she rose up, put off her little house cap with the tassel, put on her large linen head-dress, hurried out, and made for the wharf.

There in truth the Jew was standing with a group of girls about him. And some of these would sell outright to him, and then go straightway to the stores to buy filigree jewelry and rings, or bright-hued shawls, with the price of their golden locks shorn off. And some would hover about him between desire of so much artificial adornment and dread of so much natural disfigurement, until, like moths, they would fall before the light of the Jew's bright silver.

Rachel had reached the place at the first impulse of her thought, but being there her heart misgave her, and she paused on the outskirts of the crowd. To go in among these girls and sell her hair to the Jew was to make herself one with the lowest and meanest of the town, but that was not the fear that held her back. Suddenly the thought had come to her that what she had intended to do was meant to win her husband back to her, yet that she could not say what it was that had won him for her at the first. And seeing how sadly the girls were changed after the shears had passed over their heads, she could not help but ask herself what it would profit her, though she got the boat for her husband, if she lost him for herself? And thinking in this fashion she was turning away with a faltering step, when the Jew, seeing her, called to her, saying what lovely fair hair she had, and asking would she part with it. There was no going back on her purpose then, so facing it out as bravely as she could, she removed her head-dress, dropped her hair out of the plaits, until it fell in its sunny wavelets to her waist, and asked how much he would give for it. The Jew answered, "Fifty kroner."

"Make it sixty," she said, "and it is yours."

The Jew protested that he would lose by the transaction, but he paid the money into Rachel's hands, and she, lest she should repent of her bargain, prayed him to take her hair off instantly. He was nothing loth to do so, and the beautiful flaxen locks, cut close to the crown, fell in long tresses to his big shears. Rachel put back her linen head-dress, and, holding tightly the sixty silver pieces in her palm, hurried home.

Her cheeks were crimson, her eyes were wet, and her heart was beating high when she returned to her poor home in the fishing quarter. There in a shrill, tremulous voice of joy and fear, she told Stephen all, and counted out the glistening coins to the last of the sixty into his great hand.

"And now you can buy the English boat," she said, "and we shall be beholden to no one."

He answered her wild words with few of his own, and showed little pleasure; yet he closed his hand on the money, and, getting up, he went out of the house, saying he must see the Scotch captain there and then. Hardly had he gone when the old mother came in from her work on the beach, and, Rachel's hopes being high, she could not but share them with her, and so she told her all, little as was the commerce that passed between them. The mother only grunted as she listened and went on with her food.

Rachel longed for Stephen to return with the good news that all was settled and done, but the minutes passed and he did not come. The old woman sat by the hearth and smoked. Rachel waited with fear at her heart, but the hours went by and still Stephen did not appear. The old woman dozed before the fire and snored. At length, when the night had worn on towards midnight, an unsteady step came to the door, and Stephen reeled into the house drunk. The old woman awoke and laughed.

Rachel grew faint and sank to a seat. Stephen dropped to his knees on the ground before her, and in a maudling cry went on to tell of how he had thought to make one hundred kroner of her sixty by a wager, how he had lost fifty, and then in a fit of despair had spent the other ten.

"Then all is gone – all," cried Rachel. And thereupon the old woman shuffled to her feet and said bitterly, "And a good thing, too. I know you – trust me for seeing through your sly ways, my lady. You expected to take my son from me with the price of your ginger hair, you ugly baldpate."

Rachel's head grew light, and with the cry of a bated creature she turned upon the old mother in a torrent of hot words. "You low, mean, selfish soul," she cried, "I despise you more than the dirt under my feet."

Worse than this she said, and the old woman called on Stephen to hearken to her, for that was the wife he had brought home to revile his mother.

The old witch shed some crocodile tears, and Stephen lunged in between the women and with the back of his hand struck his wife across the face.

At that blow Rachel was silent for a moment, trembling like an affrighted beast, and then she turned upon her husband. "And so you have struck me – me – me," she cried. "Have you forgotten the death of Patrickson?"

The blow of her words was harder than the blow of her husband's hand. The man reeled before it, turned white, gasped for breath, then caught up his cap and fled out into the night.

CHAPTER III.

The Lad Jason

Of Rachel in her dishonor there is now not much to tell, but the little that is left is the kernel of this history.

That night, amid the strain of strong emotions, she was brought to bed before her time was yet full. Her labor was hard, and long she lay between life and death, for the angel of hope did not pull with her. But as the sun shot its first yellow rays through the little skin-covered windows, a child was born to Rachel, and it was a boy. Little joy she found in it, and remembering its father's inhumanity, she turned her face from it to the wall, trying thereby to conquer the yearning that answered to its cry.

It was then for the first time since her lying-in that the old mother came to her. She had been out searching for Stephen, and had just come upon news of him.

"He has gone in an English ship," she cried. "He sailed last night, and I have lost him forever."

And at that she leaned her quivering white face over the bed, and raised her clenched hand over Rachel's face.

"Son for son," she cried again. "May you lose your son, even as you have made me to lose mine."

The child seemed likely to answer to the impious prayer, for its little strength waned visibly. And in those first hours of her shameful widowhood the evil thought came to Rachel to do with it as the baser sort among her people were allowed to do with the children they did not wish to rear – expose it to its death before it had yet touched food. But in the throes, as she thought, of its extremity, the love of the mother prevailed over the hate of the wife, and with a gush of tears she plucked the babe to her breast. Then the neighbor, who out of pity and charity had nursed her in her dark hour, ran for the priest, that with the blessing of baptism the child might die a Christian soul.

The good man came, and took the little, sleep-bound body from Rachel's arms, and asked her the name. She did not answer, and he asked again. Once more, having no reply, he turned to the neighbor to know what the father's name had been.

"Stephen Orry," said the good woman.

"Then Stephen Stephensen," he began, dipping his fingers into the water; but at the sound of that name Rachel cried, "No, no, no."

"He has not done well by her, poor soul," whispered the woman; "call it after her own father."

"Then Jorgen Jorgensen," the priest began again; and again Rachel cried, "No, no, no," and raised herself upon her arm.

"It has no father," she said, "and I have none. If it is to die, let it go to God's throne with the badge of no man's cruelty; and if it is to live, let it be known by no man's name save its own. Call it Jason – Jason only."

And in the name of Jason the child was baptised, and so it was that Rachel, little knowing what she was doing in her blind passion and pain, severed her son from kith and kin. But in what she did out of the bitterness of her heart God himself had his own great purposes.

From that hour the child increased in strength, and soon waxed strong, and three days after, as the babe lay cooing at Rachel's breast, and she in her own despite was tasting the first sweet joys of motherhood, the old mother of Stephen came to her again.

"This is my house," she said, "and I will keep shelter over your head no longer. You must pack and away – you and your brat, both of you."

That night the Bishop of the island – Bishop Petersen, once a friend of Rachel's mother, now much in fear of the Governor, her father – came to her in secret to say that there was a house for her at the extreme west of the fishing quarter, where a fisherman had lately died, leaving the little that he had to the Church. There she betook herself with her child as soon as the days of her lying-in were

over. It was a little oblong shed, of lava blocks laid with peat for mortar, resembling on the outside two ancient seamen shoving shoulders together against the weather, and on the inside two tiny bird cages.

And having no one now to stand to her, or seem to stand, in the place of bread-winner, she set herself to such poor work as she could do and earn a scanty living by. This was cleaning the down of the eider duck, by passing it through a sieve made of yarn stretched over a hoop. By a deft hand, with extreme labor, something equal to sixpence a day could be made in this way from the English traders. With such earnings Rachel lived in content, and if Jorgen Jorgensen had any knowledge of his daughter's necessities he made no effort to relieve them.

Her child lived – a happy, sprightly, joyous bird in its little cage – and her broken heart danced to its delicious accents. It sweetened her labors, it softened her misfortunes, it made life more dear and death more dreadful; it was the strength of her arms and the courage of her soul, her summons to labor and her desire for rest. Call her wretched no longer, for now she had her child to love. Happy little dingy cabin in the fishing quarter, amid the vats for sharks' oil and the heaps of dried cod! It was filled with heaven's own light, that came not from above but radiated from the little cradle where her life, her hope, her joy, her solace lay swathed in the coverlet of all her love.

And as she worked through the long summer days on the beach, with the child playing among the pebbles at her feet, many a dream danced before her of the days to come, when her boy would sail in the ships that came to their coast, and perhaps take her with him to that island of the sea that had been her mother's English home, where men were good to women and women were true to men. Until then she must live where she was, a prisoner chained to a cruel rock; but she would not repine, she could wait, for the time of her deliverance was near. Her liberator was coming. He was at her feet; he was her child, her boy, her darling; and when he slumbered she saw him wax and grow, and when he awoke she saw her fetters break. Thus on the bridge of hope's own rainbow she spanned her little world of shame and pain.

The years went by, and Jason grew to be a strong-limbed, straight, stalwart lad, red-haired and passionate-hearted, reckless and improvident as far as improvidence was possible amid the conditions of his bringing up. He was a human waterfowl, and all his days were spent on the sea. Such work as was also play he was eager to do. He would clamber up the rocks of the island of Engy outside the harbor, to take the eggs of the eider duck from the steep places where she built her nest; and from the beginning of May to the end of June he found his mother in the eider down that she cleaned for the English traders. People whispered to Rachel that he favored his father, both in stature and character, but she turned a deaf ear to their gloomy forebodings. Her son was as fair as the day to look upon, and if he had his lazy humors, he had also one quality which overtopped them all – he loved his mother. People whispered again that in this regard also he resembled his father, who amid many vices had the same sole virtue.

Partly to shut him off from the scandal of the gossips, who might tell him too soon the story of his mother's wrecked and broken life, and partly out of the bitterness and selfishness of her bruised spirit, Rachel had brought up her boy to speak the tongue of her mother – the English tongue. Her purpose failed her, for Jason learned Icelandic on the beach as fast as English in the house; he heard the story of his mother's shame and of his father's baseness, and brought it back to her in the colors of a thrice-told tale. Vain effort of fear and pride! It was nevertheless to prepare the lad for the future that was before him.

And through all the days of her worse than widowhood, amid dark memories of the past and thoughts of the future wherein many passions struggled together, the hope lay low down in Rachel's mind that Stephen would return to her. Could he continue to stand in dread of the threat of his own wife? No, no, no. It had been only the hot word of a moment of anger, and it was gone. Stephen was staying away in fear of the brother of Patrickson. When that man was dead, or out of the way, he would return. Then he would see their boy, and remember his duty towards him, and if the lad ever again spoke bitterly of one whom he had never yet seen, she on her part would chide him, and the light

of revenge that had sometimes flashed in his brilliant blue eyes would fade away and in uplooking and affection he would walk as a son with his father's hand.

Thus in the riot of her woman's heart hope fought with fear and love with hate. And at last the brother of Patrickson did indeed disappear. Rumor whispered that he had returned to the Westmann Islands, there to settle for the rest of his days and travel the sea no more.

"Now *he* will come," thought Rachel. "Wherever he is, he will learn that there is no longer anything to fear, and he will return."

And she waited with as firm a hope that the winds would carry the word as Noah waited for the settling of the waters after the dove had found the dry land.

But time went on and Stephen did not appear, and at length under the turmoil of a heart that fought with itself, Rachel's health began to sink.

Then Patrickson returned. He had a message for her. He knew where her husband was. Stephen Orry was on the little Island of Man, far away south, in the Irish Sea. He had married again, and he had another child. His wife was dead, but his son was living.

Rachel in her weakness went to bed and rose from it no more. The broad dazzle of the sun that had been so soon to rise on her wasted life was shot over with an inky pall of cloud. Not for her was to be the voyage to England. Her boy must go alone.

It was the winter season in that stern land of the north, when night and day so closely commingle that the darkness seems never to lift. And in the silence of that long night Rachel lay in her little hut, sinking rapidly and much alone. Jason came to her from time to time, in his great sea stockings and big gloves and with the odor of the brine in his long red hair. By her bedside he would stand half-an-hour in silence, with eyes full of wonderment; for life like that of an untamed colt was in his own warm limbs, and death was very strange to him. A sudden hemorrhage brought the end, and one day darker than the rest, when Jason hastened home from the boats, the pain and panting of death were there before him. His mother's pallid face lay on her arm, her great dark eyes were glazed already, she was breathing hard and every breath was a spasm. Jason ran for the priest – the same that had named him in his baptism. The good old man came hobbling along, book in hand, and seeing how life flickered he would have sent for the Governor, but Rachel forbade him. He read to her, he sang for her in his crazy cracked voice, he shrived her, and then all being over, as far as human efforts could avail, he sat himself down on a chest, spread his print handkerchief over his knee, took out his snuffbox and waited.

Jason stood with his back to the glow of the peat fire, and his hard set face in the gloom. Never a word came from him, never a sign, never a tear. Only with the strange light in his wild eyes he looked on and listened.

Rachel stirred, and called to him.

"Are you there, Jason?" she said, feebly, and he stepped to her side.

"Closer," she whispered; and he took her cold hand in both his hands, and then her dim eyes knew where to look for his face.

"Good-bye, my brave lad," she said. "I do not fear to leave you. You are strong, you are brave, and the world is kind to them that can fight it. Only to the weak it is cruel – only to the weak and the timid – only to women – only to helpless women sold into the slavery of heartless men."

And then she told him everything – her love, her loyalty, her life. In twenty little words she told the story.

"I gave him all – all. I took a father's curse for him. He struck me – he left me – he forgot me with another woman. Listen – listen – closer still – still closer," she whispered, eagerly, and then she spoke the words that lie at the heart of this history.

"You will be a sailor, and sail to many lands. If you should ever meet your father, remember what your mother has borne from him. If you should never meet him, but should meet his son,

remember what your mother has suffered at the hands of his father. Can you hear me? Is my speech too thick? Have you understood me?"

Jason's parched throat was choking, and he did not answer.

"My brave boy, farewell," she said. "Good-bye," she murmured again, more faintly, and after that there was a lull, a pause, a sigh, a long-drawn breath, another sigh, and then over his big brown hands her pallid face fell forward, and the end was come.

For some minutes Jason stood there still in the same impassive silence. Never a tear yet in his great eyes, now wilder than they were; never a cry from his dry throat, now surging hot and athirst; never a sound in his ears, save a dull hum of words like the splash of a breaker that was coming – coming – coming from afar. She was gone who had been everything to him. She had sunk like a wave, and the waves of the ocean were pressing on behind her. She was lost, and the tides of life were flowing as before.

The old pastor shuffled to his feet, mopping his moist eyes with his red handkerchief. "Come away, my son," he said, and tapped Jason on the shoulder.

"Not yet," the lad answered hoarsely. And then he turned with a dazed look and said, like one who speaks in his sleep, "My father has killed my mother."

"No, no, don't say that," said the priest.

"Yes, yes," said the lad more loudly; "not in a day, or an hour, or a moment, but in twenty long years."

"Hush, hush, my son," the old priest murmured.

But Jason did not hear him. "Now listen," he cried, "and hear my vow." And still he held the cold hand in his hands, and still the ashy face rested on them.

"I will hunt the world over until I find that man, and when I have found him I will slay him."

"What are you saying?" cried the priest.

But Jason went on with an awful solemnity. "If he should die, and we should never meet, I will hunt the world over until I find his son, and when I have found him I will kill him for his father's sake."

"Silence, silence," cried the priest.

"So help me God!" said Jason.

"My son, my son, Vengeance is His. What are we that we should presume to it?"

Jason heard nothing, but the frost of life's first winter that had bound up his heart, deafening him, blinding him, choking him, seemed all at once to break. He pushed the cold face gently back on to the pillow, and fell over it with sobs that shook the bed.

They buried the daughter of the Governor in the acre allotted to the dead poor in the yard of the Cathedral of Reykjavik. The bells were ringing a choral peal between matins and morning service. Happy little girls in bright new gowns, with primroses on their breasts yellowing their round chins, went skipping in at the wide west doorway, chattering as they went like linnets in spring. It was Easter Day, nineteen years after Stephen Orry had fled from Iceland.

Next morning Jason signed articles on the wharf to sail as seaman before the mast on an Irish schooner homeward bound for Belfast, with liberty to call at Whitehaven in Cumberland, and Ramsey in the Isle of Man.

CHAPTER IV. An Angel in Homespun

The little island in the middle of the Irish Sea has through many centuries had its own language and laws, and its own judges and governors. Very, very long ago, it had also its own kings; and one of the greatest of them was the Icelandic seadog who bought it with blood in 1077. More recently it has had its own reigning lords, and one of the least of them was the Scottish nobleman who sold it for gold in 1765. After that act of truck and trade the English crown held the right of appointing the Governor-General. It chose the son of the Scottish nobleman. This was John, fourth Duke of Athol, and he held his office fifty-five bad years. In his day the island was not a scene of overmuch gaiety. If the memory of old men can be trusted, he contrived to keep a swashbuckler court there, but its festivities, like his own dignities, must have been maimed and lame. He did not care to see too much of it, and that he might be free to go where he would he appointed a deputy governor.

Now when he looked about him for this deputy he found just six and twenty persons ready to fall at his feet. He might have had either of the Deemsters, but he selected neither; he might have had any of the twenty-four Keys, but he selected none. It was then that he heard of a plain farmer in the north of the island, who was honored for his uprightness, beloved for his simplicity, and revered for his piety. "The very man for me," thought the lord of the swashbucklers, and he straightway set off to see him.

He found him living like a patriarch among his people, surrounded by his sons, and proud of them that they were many and strong. His name was Adam Fairbrother. In his youth he had run away to sea, been taken prisoner by the Algerines, kept twenty-eight months a slave in Barbary, had escaped and returned home captain of a Guineaman. This had been all his education and all his history. He had left the island a wild, headstrong, passionate lad; he had returned to it a sober, patient, gentle-hearted man.

Adam's house was Lague, a loose, straggling, featureless and irresolute old fabric, on five hundred hungry acres of the rocky headland of Maughold. When the Duke rode up to it Adam himself was ringing the bell above the door lintel that summoned his people to dinner. He was then in middle life, stout, yet flaccid and slack, with eyes and forehead of sweetest benevolence, mouth of softest tenderness, and hair already whitening over his ears and temples.

"The face of an angel in homespun," thought the Duke.

Adam received his visitor with the easy courtesy of an equal, first offering his hand. The Duke shook hands with him. He held the stirrup while the Duke alighted, took the horse to the stable, slackened its girths, and gave it a feed of oats, talking all the time. The Duke stepped after him and listened. Then he led the way to the house. The Duke followed. They went into the living room – an oblong kitchen with an oak table down the middle, and two rows of benches from end to end. The farming people were trooping in, bringing with them the odor of fresh peat and soil. Bowls of barley broth were being set in front of the big chair at the table end. Adam sat in this seat and motioned the Duke to the bench at his right. The Duke sat down. Then six words of grace and all were in their places – Adam himself, his wife, a shrewd-faced body, his six sons, big and shambling, his men, bare-armed and quiet, his maids, with skirts tucked up, plump and noisy, and the swashbuckler Duke, amused and silent, glancing down the long lines of the strangest company with whom he had ever yet been asked to sit at dinner. Suet pudding followed the broth, sheep's head and potatoes followed the pudding, then six words of thanks and all rose and trooped away except the Duke and Adam. That good man had not altered the habit of his life by so much as a plate of cheese for the fact that the "Lord of Mann" had sat at meat with him. "The manners of a prince," thought the Duke.

They took the armchairs at opposite sides of the ingle.

"You look cosy in your retreat, Mr. Fairbrother," said the Duke; "but since your days in Guinea have you never dreamt of a position of more power, and perhaps of more profit?"

"As for power," answered Adam, "I have observed that the name and the reality rarely go together."

"The experience of a statesman," thought the Duke.

"As for profit," he continued, "I have reflected that money has never yet since the world began tempted a happy man."

"The wisdom of a judge," thought the Duke.

"And as for myself I am a completely happy one."

"With more than a judge's integrity," thought the Duke.

At that the Duke told the purpose of his visit.

"And now," he said, with uplifted hands, "don't say I've gone far to fare worse. The post I offer requires but one qualification in the man who fills it, yet no one about me possesses the simple gift. It needs an honest man, and all the better if he's not a fool. Will you take it?"

"No," said Adam, short and blunt.

"The very man," thought the Duke.

Six months later the Duke had his way. Adam Fairbrother, of Lague, was made Governor of Mann (under the Duke himself as Governor-General) at a salary of five hundred pounds a year.

On the night of Midsummer Day, 1793, the town of Ramsey held high festival. The *Royal George* had dropped anchor in the bay, and the Prince of Wales, attended by the Duke of Athol, Captain Murray and Captain Cook, had come ashore to set the foot of an English Prince for the first time on Manx soil. Before dusk, the Royal ship had weighed anchor again, but when night fell in the festivities had only begun. Guns were fired, bands of music passed through the town, and bonfires were lighted on the top of the Sky Hill. The kitchens of the inns were crowded, and the streets were thronged with country people enveloped in dust. In the market place the girls were romping, the young men drinking, the children shouting at the top of their voices, the peddlers edging their barrows through the crowd and crying their wares. Over all the tumult of exuberant voices, the shouting, the laughter, the merry shrieks, the gay banter, the barking of sheep-dogs, the snarling of mongrel setters, the streaming and smoking of hawkers' torches across a thousand faces, there was the steady peal of the bell of Ballure.

In the midst of it all a strange man passed through the town. He was of colossal stature – stalwart, straight, and flaxen-haired, wearing a goatskin cap without brim, a gray woollen shirt open at the neck and belted with a leathern strap, breeches of untanned leather, long thick stockings, a second pair up to his ankles, and no shoes on his feet. His face was pale, his cheek bones stood high, and his eyes were like the eyes of a cormorant. The pretty girls stopped their chatter to look after him, but he strode on with long steps, and the people fell aside for him.

At the door of the Saddle Inn he stood a moment, but voices came from within and he passed on. Going by the Court House he came to the Plough Tavern, and there he stopped again, paused a moment, and then stepped in. After a time the children who had followed at his heels separated, and the girls who had looked after him began to dance with arms akimbo and skirts held up over their white ankles. He was forgotten.

An hour later, four men, armed with cutlasses, and carrying ship's irons, came hurrying from the harbor. They were blue-jackets from the revenue cutter lying in the bay, and they were in pursuit of a seaman who had escaped from the English brig at anchor outside. The runaway was a giant and a foreigner, and could not speak a word of English or Manx. Had anyone seen him? Yes, everyone. He had gone into the Plough. To the Plough the blue-jackets made their way. The good woman who kept it, Mother Beatty, had certainly seen such a man. "Aw, yes, the poor craythur, he came, so he did," but never a word could he speak to her, and never a word could she speak to him, so she gave him a bit of barley cake, and maybe a drop of something, and that was all. He was not in the house

then? "Och, let them look for themselves." The blue-jackets searched the house, and came out as they had entered. Then they passed through every street, looked down every alley, peered into every archway, and went back to their ship empty-handed.

When they were gone Mother Beatty came to the door and looked out. At the next instant the big-limbed stranger stepped from behind her.

"That way," she whispered, and pointed to a dark alley opposite.

The man watched the direction of her finger in the darkness, doffed his cap, and strode away.

The alley led him by many a turn to the foot of a hill. It was Ballure. Behind him lay the town, with the throngs, the voices, and the bands of music. To his left was the fort, belching smoke and the roar of cannon. To his right were the bonfires on the hilltop, with little dark figures passing before them, and a glow above them embracing a third of the sky. In front of him was the gloom and silence of the country. He walked on; a fresh coolness came to him out of the darkness, and over him a dull murmur hovered in the air. He was going towards Kirk Maughold.

He passed two or three little houses by the wayside, but most of them were dark. He came by a tavern, but the door was shut, and no one answered when he knocked. At length, by the turn of a byroad, he saw a light through the trees, and making towards it he found a long shambling house under a clump of elms. He was at Lague.

The light he saw was from one window only, and he stepped up to it. A man was sitting alone by the hearth, with the glow of a gentle fire on his face – a beautiful face, soft and sweet and tender. It was Adam Fairbrother.

The stranger stood a moment in the darkness, looking into the quiet room. Then he tapped on the windowpane.

On this evening Governor Fairbrother was worn with toil and excitement. It had been Tynwald Day, and while sitting at St. John's he had been summoned to Ramsey to receive the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Athol. The royal party had already landed when he arrived, but not a word of apology had he offered for the delayed reception. He had taken the Prince to the top of the Sky Hill, talking as he went, answering many questions and asking not a few, naming the mountains, running through the island's history, explaining the three legs of its coat of arms, glancing at its ancient customs and giving a taste of its language. He had been simple, sincere, and natural from first to last, and when the time had come for the Prince to return to his ship he had presented his six sons to him with the quiet dignity of a patriarch, saying these were his gifts to his king that was to be. Then on the quay he had offered the Prince his hand, hoping he might see him again before long; for he was a great lover of a happy face, and the Prince, it was plain to see, was, like himself, a man of a cheerful spirit.

But when the *Royal George* had sailed out of the bay at the top of the tide, and the great folk who had held their breath in awe of so much majesty were preparing to celebrate the visit with the blazing of cannon and the beating of drums, Adam Fairbrother had silently slipped away. He lived at Government House, but had left his three elder boys at Lague, and thought this a happy chance of spending a night at home. Only his sons' housekeeper, a spinster aunt of his own, was there, and when she had given him a bite of supper he had sent her after the others to look at the sights of Ramsey. Then he had drawn up his chair before the fire, charged his long pipe, purred a song to himself, begun to smoke, to doze, and to dream.

His dreams that night had been woven with vision of his bad days in the slave factory at Barbary – of his wreck and capture, of his cruel tortures before his neck was yet bowed to the yoke of bondage, of the whip, before he knew the language of his masters to obey it quickly, of the fetters on his hands, the weights on his legs, the collar about his neck, of the raw flesh where the iron had torn the skin; and then of the dark wild night of his escape when he and three others, as luckless and as miserable, had run a raft into the sea, stripped off their shirts for a sail, and thrust their naked bodies together to keep them warm.

Such was the gray silt that came up to him that night from the deposits of his memory. The Tynwald, the Prince, the Duke, the guns, the music, the bonfires, were gone; bit by bit he pieced together the life he had lived in his youth, and at the thought of it, and that it was now over, he threw back his head and gave thanks where they were due.

At that moment he heard a tap at the windowpane, and turning about he saw a man's haggard face peering in at him from the darkness. Then he rose instantly, and threw open the door of the porch.

"Come in," he called.

The man entered.

He took one step into the house and stopped, seemed for a moment puzzled, dazed, sleepless, and then by a sudden impulse stepped quietly forward, pulled up the sleeve of his shirt and held out his arm. Around his wrist there was a circular abrasure where the loop of a fetter had worn away the skin, leaving the naked flesh raw and red.

He had been in irons.

With a word of welcome the Governor motioned the man to a seat. Some inarticulate sounds the man made and waved his hand.

He was a foreigner. What was his craft?

A tiny model of a full-rigged ship stood on the top of a corner cupboard. Adam pointed to it, and the man gave a quick nod of assent.

He was a seaman. Of what country?

"Shetlands?" asked the Governor.

The man shook his head.

"Sweden? Norway? – "

"Issland," said the man.

He was an Iclander.

Two rude portraits hung on the walls, one of a fair boy, the other of a woman in the early bloom of womanhood – Adam's young wife and first child. The Governor pointed to the boy, and the man shook his head.

He had no family.

The Governor pointed to the woman, and the man hesitated, seemed about to assent, and then, with the look of one who tries to banish an unwelcome thought, shook his head again.

He had no wife. What was his name?

The Governor took down from a shelf a Bible covered in green cloth, and opened at the writing on the fly-leaf between the Old and New Testaments. The writing ran: – "Adam Fairbrother, son of Jo: Fairbrother, and Mar: his wife, was born August the 11th, 1753, about 5 o'clock in the morning, half flood, wind at southwest, and christened August 18th." To this he pointed, then to himself, and finally to the stranger. An abrupt change came over the man's manner. He grew sullen and gave no sign. But his eyes wandered with a fierce eagerness to the table, where the remains of the Governor's supper were still lying.

Adam drew up a chair and motioned the stranger to sit and eat. The man ate with frightful voracity, the perspiration breaking out in beads over his face. Having eaten, he grew drowsy, fell to nodding where he sat, and in a moment of recovered consciousness pointed to the stuffed head of a horse that hung over the door. He wished to sleep in the stable.

The Governor lit a lantern and led the way to the stable loft. There the man stretched himself on the straw, and soon his long and measured breathing told that he slept.

Hardly had the Governor got back to the house when his boys, his men, and the maids returned from Ramsey. Very full they all were of the doings of the day, and Adam, who never asked that son or servant of his should abridge the flow of talk for his presence, sat with his face to the fire and smoked, dozed, dreamt or thought, and left his people to gossip on. What chance had brought the poor man to his door that night? An Iclander, dumb for all uses of speech, who had lain in the

chains of some tyrant captain – a lone man, a seaman without wife or child in his own country, and a fugitive, a runaway, a hunted dog in this one! What angel of pleading had that very night been busy in his own memory with the story of his similar sufferings?

All at once his ear was arrested by what was being said behind him. The talk was of a sailor who had passed through the town, and of the blue-jackets who were in pursuit of him. He had stolen something. No, he had murdered somebody. Anyway there was a warrant for his arrest, for the High Bailiff had drawn it. An ill-looking fellow, but he would be caught yet, thank goodness, in God's good time.

The Governor twisted about, and asked what the sailor was like, and his boys answered him that he was a foreigneering sort of a man in a skin cap and long stockings, and bigger by half a head than Billy-by-Nite.

Just then there was the tramp of feet on the gravel outside and a loud rap at the door. Four men entered. They were the blue-jackets. The foreign seaman that they were in search of had been seen creeping up Ballure, and turning down towards Lague. Had he been there?

At that one of the boys, saying that his father had been at home all evening, turned to the Governor and repeated the question. But the good Adam had twisted back to the fire, and with the shank of his pipe hanging loosely from his lips, was now snoring heavily.

"His Excellency is asleep," said the blue-jacket.

No, no; that could not be, for he had been talking as they entered. "Father," cried the lad, and pushed him.

Then the Governor opened his eyes, and yawned heavily. The blue-jacket, cap in hand, told his story again, and the good Adam seemed to struggle hard in the effort to grasp it through the mists of sleep. At length he said, "What has the man done?"

"Deserted his ship, your Excellency."

"Nothing else – no crime?"

"Nothing else, your Excellency. Has he been here?"

"No;" said the Governor.

And at that the weary man shut his eyes again and began to breathe most audibly. But when the blue-jackets, taking counsel together, concluded that somewhere thereabouts the man must surely be, and decided to sleep the night in the stable loft, that they might scour the country in the morning, the Governor awoke suddenly, saying he had no beds to offer them, but they might sleep on the benches of the kitchen.

An hour later, when all Lague was asleep, Adam rose from his bed, took a dark lantern and went back to the stable loft, aroused the Iclander and motioned him to follow. They crossed the paved courtyard and came in front of the window. Adam pointed, and the man looked in. The four blue-jackets were lying on the benches drawn round the fire, and the dull glow of the slumbering peat was on their faces. They were asleep. At that sight the man's eyes flashed, his mouth set hard, the muscles of his cheeks contracted, and with a hoarse cry in his throat, he fumbled the haft of the seaman's knife that hung in his belt and made one step forward.

But Adam, laying hold of his arm, looked into his eyes steadfastly, and in the light of the lantern their wild glance fell before him. At the next instant the man was gone.

The night was now far spent. In the town the forts were silent, the streets quiet, the market place vacant, and on the hilltops the fires had smouldered down. By daybreak next morning the blue-jackets had gone back empty to Ramsey, and by sunrise the English brig had sailed out of the bay.

Two beautiful creeks lie to the south of Ramsey and north of Maughold Head. One is called Lague, the other Port-y-Vullin. On the shore of Port-y-Vullin there is a hut built of peat and thatched with broom – dark, damp, boggy and ruinous, a ditch where the tenant is allowed to sit rent free. The sun stood high when a woman, coming out of this place, found a man sleeping in a broken-ribbed boat that lay side down on the beach. She awakened him, and asked him into her hut. He rose to his

feet and followed her. Last night he had been turned out of the best house in the island; this morning he was about to be received into the worst.

The woman was Liza Killey – the slut, the trollop, the trull, the slattern and drab of the island.
The man was Stephen Orry.

CHAPTER V. Little Sunlocks

One month only had then passed since the night of Stephen Orry's flight from Iceland, and the story of his fortunes in the meantime is quickly told. In shame of his brutal blow, as well as fear of his wife's threat, he had stowed away in the hold of an English ship that sailed the same night. Two days later famine had brought him out of his hiding place, and he had been compelled to work before the mast. In ten more days he had signed articles as able seaman at the first English port of call. Then had followed punishments for sloth, punishments for ignorance, and punishments for not knowing the high-flavored language of his boatswain. After that had come bickerings, threats, scowls, oaths, and open ruptures with this chief of petty tyrants, ending with the blow of a marlin-spike over the big Iclander's crown, and the little boatswain rolling headlong overboard. Then had followed twenty-eight days spent in irons, rivetted to the ship's side on the under deck, with bread and water diet every second day and nothing between. Finally, by the secret good fellowship of a shipmate with some bowels of compassion, escape had come after starvation, as starvation had come after slavery, and Stephen had swum ashore while his ship lay at anchor in Ramsey Bay.

What occurred thereafter at the house whereto he had drifted no one could rightly tell. He continued to live there with the trull who kept it. She had been the illegitimate child of an insolvent English debtor and the daughter of a neighboring vicar, had been ignored by her father, put out to nurse by her mother, bred in ignorance, reared in impurity, and had grown into a buxom hussy. By what arts, what hints, what appeals, what allurements, this trollop got possession of Stephen Orry it is not hard to guess. First, he was a hunted man, and only one who dare do anything dare open doors to him. Next, he was a foreigner, dumb for speech, and deaf for scandal, and therefore unable to learn more than his eyes could tell him of the woman who had given him shelter. Then the big Iclander was a handsome fellow; and the veriest drab that ever trailed a petticoat knows how to hide her slatternly habits while she is hankering after a fine-grown man. So the end of many conspiring circumstances was that after much gossip in corners, many jeers, and some tossings of female heads, the vicar of the parish, Parson Gell, called one day at the hut in Port-y-Vullin, and on the following Sunday morning, at church, little Robbie Christian, the clerk and sexton, read out the askings for the marriage of Liza Killey, spinster, of the parish of Maughold, and Stephen Orry, bachelor, out of Iceland.

What a wedding it was that came three weeks later! Liza wore a gay new gown that had been lent her by a neighbor, Bella Coobragh, a girl who had meant to be married in it herself the year before, but had not fully carried out her moral intention and had since borne a child. Wearing such borrowed plumes and a brazen smile of defiance, Liza strutted up to the Communion rail, looking impudently into the men's faces, and saucily into the women's – for the church was thronged with an odorous mob that kept up the jabbering of frogs at spawn – and Stephen Orry slouched after her in his blowzy garments with a downward, shame-faced, nervous look that his hulky manners could not conceal. Then what a wedding feast it was that followed! The little cabin in Port-y-Vullin reeked and smoked with men and women, and ran out on to the sand and pebbles of the beach, for the time of year was spring and the day was clear and warm. Liza's old lovers were there in troops. With a keg of rum over his shoulder Nary Crowe, the innkeeper, had come down from the "Hibernian" to give her joy, and Cleave Kinley, the butcher, had brought her up half a lamb from Ballaglass, and Matt Mylechreest, the net maker – a venal old skinflint – had charged his big snuff horn to the brim for the many noses of the guests. On the table, the form, the three-legged stool, the bed and the hearth, they sat together cheek by jowl their hats hung on the roof rafters, their plates perched on their knees.

And loud was their laughter and dubious their talk. Old Thurstan Coobragh led off on the advantages of marriage, saying it was middlin' plain that the gels nowadays must be wedded when they were babies in arms, for bye-childers were common, and a gel's father didn't care in a general

way to look like a fool; but Nary Crowe saw no harm in a bit of sweetheartin', and Cleave Kinley said no, of course, not if a man wasn't puttin' notions into a gel's head, and Matt Mylechreest, for his part, thought the gels were amazin' like the ghosts, for they got into every skeleton closet about the house.

"But then," said Matt, "I'm an ould bachelor, as the sayin' is, and don't know nothin'."

"Ha, ha, ha! of course not," laughed the others; and then there was a taste of a toast to Liza's future in Nary's rum.

"Drop it," said Liza, as Nary, lifting his cup, leaned over to whisper.

"So I will, but it'll be into your ear, woman," said Nary. "So here's to the king that's comin'."

By this time Stephen had slipped out of the noisome place, and was rambling on the quiet shore alone, with head bent, cheeks ashy pale, eyes fixed, and his brawny hands thrust deep into his pockets. At last, through the dense fumes within the house, Bella Coobragh noted Stephen's absence, and "Where's your man?" she said to Liza, with a tantalizing light in her eyes.

"Maybe where yours is, Bella," said Liza, with a toss of the head; "near enough, perhaps, but not visible to the naked eye."

The effects of going to church on Liza Killey were what they often are of a woman of base nature. With a man to work for her she became more idle than before, and with nothing to fear from scandal more reckless and sluttish. Having hidden her nakedness in the gown of marriage, she lost the last rag of womanly shame.

The effects on Stephen Orry were the deepening of his sloth, his gloom and his helplessness. What purpose in life he ever had was paralyzed. On his first coming to the island he had sailed to the mackerel fishing in the boats of Kane Wade – a shrewd Manxman, who found the big, dumb Icelander a skilful fisherman. Now he neglected his work, lost self-reliance, and lay about for hours, neither thinking nor feeling, but with a look of sheer stupidity. And so the two sat together in their ditch, sinking day by day deeper and yet deeper into the mire of idleness, moroseness, and mutual loathing. Nevertheless, they had their cheerful hours together.

The "king" of Nary's toast soon came. A child was born – a bonny, sunny boy as ever yet drew breath; but Liza looked on it as a check to her freedom, a drain on her energy, something helpless and looking to her for succor. So the unnatural mother neglected it, and Stephen, who was reminded by its coming that Rachel had been about to give birth to a child, turned his heart from it and ignored it.

Thus three spirit-breaking years dragged on, and Stephen Orry grew woe-begone and stone-eyed. Of old he had been slothful and spiritless indeed, but not a base man. Now his whole nature was all but gone to the gutter. He had once been a truth-teller, but living with a woman who assumed that he must be a liar, he had ended by becoming one. He had no company save her company, for his slow wit had found it hard to learn the English tongue, and she alone could rightly follow him; he had no desires save the petty ones of daily food and drink; he had no purpose save the degrading purpose of defeating the nightly wanderings of his drunken wife. Thus without any human eye upon him in the dark way he was going, Stephen Orry had grown coarse and base.

But the end was not yet, of all this than was to be and know. One night, after spending the day on the sea with the lines for cod, the year deepening to winter, the air muggy and cold, he went away home, hungry, and wet and cold, leaving his mates at the door of the "Plough," where there was good company within and the cheer of a busy fire! Home! On reaching Port-y-Vullin he found the door open, the hearth cold, the floor in a puddle from the driving rain, not a bite or sup in the cupboard, and his wife lying drunk across the bed, with the child in its grimy blueness creeping and crying about her head.

It was the beginning of the end. Once again he fumbled the haft of his seaman's knife, and then by a quick impulse he plucked up the child in his arms.

"Now God be praised for your poor face," he said, and while he dried the child's pitiful eyes, the hot drops started to his own.

He lit the fire, he cooked a cod he had brought home with him, he ate himself and fed the little one. Then he sat before the hearth with the child at his breast, as any mother might do, for at length it had come to him to know that, if it was not to be lost and worse than orphaned, he must henceforth be father and mother both to it.

And when the little eyes, wet no longer, but laughing like sunshine into the big seared face above them struggled in vain with sleep, he wrapped the child in his ragged guernsey and put it to lie like a bundle where the fire could warm it. Then all being done he sat again, and leaning his elbows on his knees covered his ears with his hands, so that they might shut out the sound of the woman's heavy breathing.

It was on that night, for the first time since he fled from Iceland, that he saw the full depth of his offence. Offence? Crime it was, and that of the blackest; and in the terror of his loneliness he trembled at the thought that some day his horrible dumb secret would become known, that something would happen to tell it – that he was married already when he married the woman who lay behind him.

At that he saw how low he had fallen – from her who once had been so pure and true beside him, and had loved him and given up father, and home, and fame for him; to this trull, who now dragged him through the slush, and trod on him and hated him. Then the bitter thought came that what she had suffered for him who had given him everything, he could never repay by one kind word or look. Lost she was to him forever and ever, and parted from him by a yet wider gulf than eight hundred miles of sea. Such was the agony of his shame, and through it all the snore of the sleeping woman went like iron through his head, so that at last he wrapped his arms about it and sobbed out to the dead fire at his feet, "Rachel! Rachel! Rachel!"

All at once he became conscious that the heavy breathing had ceased, that the house was silent, that something had touched him on the shoulder, and that a gaunt shadow stood beside him. It was the woman, who at the sound of his voice had arisen from her drunken sleep, and now gasped,

"Who is Rachel?"

At that word his blood ran cold, and shivering in his clothes, he crouched lower at the hearth, neither answering her nor looking up.

Then with eyes of hate she cried again,

"Who is Rachel?"

But the only voice that answered her was the voice that rang within him – "I'm a lost man, God help me."

"Who is Rachel?" the woman cried once more, and the sound of that name from her lips, hardening it, brutalizing it, befouling it, was the most awful thing by which his soul had yet been shaken out of its stupor.

"Who is she, I say? Answer me," she cried in a raging voice; but he crouched there still, with his haggard face and misty eyes turned down.

Then she laid her hand on his shoulder and shook him, and cried bitterly.

"Who is she, this light o' love – this baggage?"

At that he stiffened himself up, shuddered from head to foot, flung her from him and answered in a terrible voice.

"Woman, she is my wife."

That word, like a thunderbolt, left a heavy silence behind it. Liza stood looking in terror at Stephen's face, unable to utter a cry.

But next day she went to Parson Gell and told him all. She got small comfort. Parson Gell had himself had two wives; the first had deserted him, and after an interval of six years, in which he had not heard from her, he had married the second. So to Liza he said,

"He may have sinned against the law, but what proof have you? None."

Then she went to the Deemster at Ramsey. It was Deemster Lace – a bachelor much given to secret gallantries.

She got as little cheer from this source, but yet she came away with one drop of solace fermenting in the bitterness of her heart.

"Tut, woman, it's more common than you think for. And where's the harm? Och! it's happened to some of the best that's going. Now, if he'd beaten you, or struck you" – and the good man raised both hands and shook his head.

Then the thought leapt to her mind that she herself could punish Stephen a hundredfold worse than any law of bishop or deemster. If she could she would not now put him away. He should live on with her, husband or no husband, and she with him, wife or no wife.

On her way home she called at the house of Kane Wade, sat down with old Bridget, shed some crocodile tears, vowed she daren't have tould it on no occount to no other morthal sowl, but would the heart of woman belave it? her man had a wife in his own counthry!

Bridget, who had herself had four husbands, lifted her hands in horror, and next day when Stephen Orry went down to the boats Kane Wade, who had newly turned Methodist, was there already, and told him – whittling a stick as he spoke – that the fishing was wonderful lean living gettin', and if he didn't shorten hands it would be goin' begging on the houses they'd all be, sarten sure.

Stephen took the hint in silence, and went off home. Liza saw him coming, watched him from the door, and studied his hard set face with a grim smile on her own.

Next day Stephen went off to Matt Mylechreest, the net maker, but Matt shook his head, saying the Manxmen had struck against foreign men all over the island, and would not work with them. The day after that Stephen tried Nary Crowe, the innkeeper, but Nary said of course it wasn't himself that was partic'lar, only his customers were gettin' nice extraordinary about a man's moral character.

As a last hope Stephen went up to Cleave Kinley, who had land, and asked for a croft of five acres that ran down to the beach of Port-y-Vullin.

"Nothing easier," said Kinley, "but I must have six pounds for it, beginning half-quarter day."

The rent was high, but Stephen agreed to it, and promised to go again the following day to seal his bargain. Stephen was prompt to his engagement, but Kinley had gone on the mountains after some sheep. Stephen waited, and four hours later Kinley returned, looking abashed but dogged and saying he must have good security or a year's rent down.

Stephen went back home with his head deep in his breast. Again the woman saw him coming, again she studied his face, and again she laughed in her heart.

"He will lift his hand to me," she thought, "and then we shall see."

But he seemed to read her purpose, and determined to defeat it. She might starve him, herself, and their child, but the revenge she had set her mind upon she should not have.

Yet to live with her and to contain himself at every brutal act or bestial word was more than he could trust himself to do, and he determined to fly away. Let it be anywhere – anywhere, if only out of the torture of her presence. One place was like another in Man, for go where he would to any corner of the island, there she would surely follow him.

Old Thurston Coobragh, of Ballacreggan, gave him work at draining a flooded meadow. It was slavery that no other Christian man would do, but for a month Stephen Orry worked up to his waist in water, and lived on barley bread and porridge. At the end of his job he had six and thirty shillings saved, and with this money in his pocket, and the child in his arms, he hurried down to the harbor at Ramsey, where an Irish packet lay ready to sail.

Could he have a passage to Ireland? Certainly he could, but where was his license?

Stephen Orry had never heard until then that before a man could leave the Isle of Man he must hold a license permitting him to do so.

"Go to the High Bailiff," said the captain of the packet; and to the High Bailiff Stephen Orry went.

"I come for a license to go away into Ireland," he said.

"Very good. But where is your wife?" said the High Bailiff. "Are you leaving her behind you to be a burden on the parish?"

At that Stephen's heart sank, for he saw that his toil had been wasted, and that his savings were worthless. Doomed he was for all his weary days to live with the woman who hated him. He was bound to her, he was leashed to her, and he must go begrimed and bedraggled to the dregs of life with her. So he went back home, and hid his money in a hole in the thatch of the roof, that the touch of it might vex his memory no more.

And then it flashed upon him that what he was now suffering from this woman was after all no more than the complement and counterpart of what Rachel had suffered from him in the years behind them. It was just – yes, it was just – and because he was a man and Rachel a woman, it was less than he deserved. So thinking, he sat himself down in his misery with resignation if not content, vowing never to lift his hand to the woman, however tormented, and never to leave her, however tempted. And when one night after a storm an open boat came ashore, he took it and used it to fish with, and thus he lived, and thus he wore away his wretched days.

And yet he could never have borne his punishment but for the sweet solace of the child. It was the flower in his dungeon; the bird at its bars. Since that bad night, when his secret had burst from him, he had nursed it and cherished it, and done for it its many tender offices. Every day he had softened its oatcake in his broth; and lifted the barley out of his own bowl into the child's basin. In summer he had stripped off shoes and stockings to bathe the little one in the bay, and in winter he had wrapped the child in his jacket and gone bare-armed. It was now four years old and went everywhere with Stephen, astride on his broad back or perched on his high shoulders. He had christened it Michael, but because its long wavy hair grew to be of the color of the sun he called it, after the manner of his people, Sunlocks. And like the sun it was, in that hut in Port-y-Vullin, for when it awoke there was a glint of rosy light, and when it slept all was gloom.

He taught it to speak his native Icelandic tongue, and the woman, who found everything evil that Stephen did, found this a barrier between her and the child. It was only in his ignorance that he did it. But oh, strange destiny! that out of the father's ignorance was to shape the child's wisdom in the days that were to come!

And little Sunlocks was eyes and ears to Stephen, and hope to his crushed spirit and intelligence to his slow mind. At sight of the child the vacant look would die away from Stephen's face; at play with him Stephen's great hulking legs would run hither and thither in ready willingness; and at hearing his strange questions, his wondrous answers, his pretty clever sayings, Stephen's dense wit would seem to stand agape.

Oh, little Sunlocks – little Sunlocks – floating like the day-dawn into this lone man's prison house, how soon was your glad light to be overcast! For all at once it smote Stephen like a blow on the brain that though it was right that he should live with the woman, yet it was an awful thing that the child should continue to do so. Growing up in such an atmosphere, with such an example always present to his eyes, what would the child become? Soured, saddened, perhaps cunning, perhaps malicious; at least adopting himself, as his father had done before him, to the air he had to breathe. And thinking that little Sunlocks, now so sweet, so sunny, so artless, so innocent, must come to this, all the gall of Stephen Orry's fate rose to his throat again.

What could he do? Take little Sunlocks away? That was impossible, for he could not take himself away. Why had the child been born? Why had it not died? Would not the good God take it back to Himself even now, in all the sweetness of his childhood? No, no, no, not that either; and yet yes, yes, yes!

Stephen's poor slow brain struggled long with this thought, and at length a strange and solemn idea took hold of it: little Sunlocks must die, and he must kill him.

Stephen Orry did not wriggle with his conscience, or if he cozened it at all he made himself believe that it would not be sin but sacrifice to part with the thing he held dearest in all the world. Little Sunlocks was his life, but little Sunlocks must die! Better, better, better so!

And having thus determined, he went cautiously, and even cunningly, to work. When the little one had disappeared, he himself would never be suspected, for all the island would say he loved it too tenderly to do it a wrong, and he would tell everybody that he had taken it to some old body in the south who had wished to adopt a child. So, with Sunlocks laughing and crowing astride his shoulder, he called at Kane Wade's house on Ballure one day, and told Bridget how he should miss the little chap, for Sunlocks was going down to the Calf very soon, and would not come home again for a long time, perhaps not for many a year, perhaps not until he was a big slip of a lad, and, maybe – who can tell? – he would never come back at all.

Thus he laid his plans, but even when they were complete he could not bring himself to carry them through, until one day, going up from the beach to sell a basket of crabs and eels, he found Liza drinking at the "Hibernian."

How she came by the money was at first his surprise, for Nary Crowe had long abandoned her; and having bitter knowledge of the way she had once spent his earnings, he himself gave her nothing now. But suddenly a dark thought came, and he hurried home, thrust his hand into the thatch where he had hidden his savings, and found the place empty.

That was the day to do it, he thought; and he took little Sunlocks and washed his chubby face and combed his yellow hair, curling it over his own great undeft fingers, and put his best clothes on him – the white cotton pinafore and the red worsted cap, and the blue stockings freshly darned.

This he did that he might comfort the child for the last time, and also that he might remember him at his best.

And little Sunlocks, in high glee at such busy preparations, laughed much and chattered long, asking many questions.

"Where are we going, father? Out? Eh? Where?"

"We'll see, little Sunlocks; we'll see."

"But where? Church? What day is this?"

"The last, little Sunlocks; the last."

"Oh, I know – Sunday."

When all was ready, Stephen lifted the child to the old perch across his shoulders, and made for the shore. His boat was lying aground there; he pushed it adrift, lifted the child into it, and leapt after him. Then taking the oars, he pulled out for Maughold Head.

Little Sunlocks had never been out in the boat before, and everything was a wonder and delight to him.

"You said you would take me on the water some day. Didn't you, father?"

"Yes, little Sunlocks, yes."

It was evening, and the sun was sinking behind the land, very large and red in its setting.

"Do the sun fall down eve'y day, father?"

"It sets, little Sunlocks, it sets."

"What is sets?"

"Dies."

"Oh."

The waters lay asleep under the soft red glow, and over them the seafowl were sailing.

"Why are the white birds sc'eaming?"

"Maybe they're calling their young, little Sunlocks."

It was late spring, and on the headland the sheep were bleating.

"Look at the baby one – away, away up yonder. What's it doing there by itself on the 'ock, and c'ying, and c'ying, and c'ying?"

"Maybe it's lost, little Sunlocks."

"Then why doesn't somebody go and tell its father?"

And the innocent face was full of trouble.

The sun went down and the twilight deepened, the air grew chill, the waters black, and Stephen was still pulling round the head.

"Father, where does the night go when we are asleep?"

"To the other world, little Sunlocks."

"Oh, I know – heaven."

Stephen stripped off his guernsey and wrapped it about the child. His eyes shone brightly, his mouth was parched, but he did not flinch. All thoughts, save one thought, had faded from his view.

As he came by Port Mooar the moon rose, and about the same time the light appeared on Point of Ayre. A little later he saw the twinkle of lesser lights to the south. They were the lights of Laxey, where many happy children gladdened many happy firesides. He looked around. There was not a sail in sight, and not a sound came to his ears over the low murmur of the sea's gentle swell. "Now is the time," he thought. He put in his oars and the boat began to drift.

But no, he could not look into the child's eyes and do it. The little one would sleep soon and then it would be easier done. So he took him in his arms and wrapped him in a piece of sail-cloth.

"Shut your eyes and sleep, little Sunlocks."

"I'm not sleepy, I'm not."

Yet soon the little lids fell, opened again and fell once more, and then suddenly the child started up.

"But I haven't said my p'ayers."

"Say them now, little Sunlocks."

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, Look upon a little child, Guard me while in sleep I lie, Take me to Thy home on – on – "

"Would you like to go to heaven, little Sunlocks?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I want to keep with – with – my fath – "

The little eyes were closed by this time, and the child was asleep on Stephen's knees. Now was the time – now – now. But no, it was harder now than ever.

The little face – so silent, so peaceful – how formidable it was! The little soft hand in his own big hard palm – how strong and terrible!

Stephen looked down at the child and his bowels yearned over it. It cost him a struggle not to kiss it; but no, that would only make the task harder.

Suddenly a new thought smote him. What had this child done that he should take its life? Who was he that he should rob it of what he could never give it again? By what right did he dare to come between this living soul and heaven? When did the Almighty God tell *him* what the after life of this babe was to be? Stephen trembled at the thought. It was like a voice from the skies calling on him to stop, and a hand reaching out of them to snatch the child from his grasp.

What he had intended to do was not to be! Heaven had set its face against it! Little Sunlocks was not to die! Little Sunlocks was to live! Thank God! Oh! Thank God!

But late that night a group of people standing at their doors on the beach at Port Lague saw a tall man in his shirt sleeves go by in the darkness, with a sleeping child in his arms. The man was Stephen Orry, and he was sobbing like a woman whose heart is broken. The child was little Sunlocks, and he was being carried back to his mother's home.

The people hailed Stephen and told him that a foreigner from a ship in the bay had been asking for him that evening. They had sent the man along to Port-y-Vullin.

Stephen hurried home with fear in his heart. In five minutes he was there, and then his life's blood ran cold. He found the house empty, except for his wife, and she lay outstretched on the floor. She was cold – she was dead; and in clay on the wall above her head, these words were written in the Icelandic tongue, "So is Patrickson avenged —*signed S. Patrickson.*"

Avenged! Oh, powers of Heaven, that drive the petty passions of men like dust before you!

CHAPTER VI.

The Little World of Boy and Girl

Three days later the bad lottery of Liza Killey's life and death was played out and done. On the morning of the fourth day, some time before the dawn, though the mists were rolling in front of it, Stephen Orry rose in his silent hut in Port-y-Vullin, lit a fire, cooked a hasty meal, wakened, washed, dressed and fed little Sunlocks, then nailed up the door from the outside, lifted the child to his shoulders, and turned his face towards the south. When he passed through Laxey the sun stood high, and the dust of the roads was being driven in their faces. It was long past noon when he came to Douglas, and at a little shop by the harbor-bridge he bought a penny worth of barley cake, gave half to Sunlocks, put the other half into his pocket, and pushed on with longer strides. The twilight was deepening when he reached Castletown, and there he inquired for the house of the Governor. It was pointed out to him, and through heavy iron gates, up a winding carriage-way lined with elms and bordered with daffodils, he made towards the only door he saw.

It was the main entrance to Government House, a low broad porch, with a bench on either side and a cross-barred door of knotted oak. Stephen Orry paused before it, looked nervously around, and then knocked with his knuckles. He had walked six and twenty miles, carrying the child all the way. He was weary, footsore, hungry, and covered with dust. The child on his shoulder was begrimed and dirty, his little face smeared in streaks, his wavy hair loaded and unkempt. A footman in red and buff, powdered, starched, gartered and dainty, opened the door. Stephen Orry asked for the Governor. The footman looked out with surprise at the bedraggled man with the child, and asked who he was. Stephen told his name. The footman asked where he came from. Stephen answered. The footman asked what he came for. Stephen did not reply. Was it for meal? Stephen shook his head. Or money? Stephen said no. With another glance of surprise the footman shut the door, saying the Governor was at dinner.

Stephen Orry lowered the little one from his shoulder, sat on the bench in the porch, placed the child on his knee, and gave him the remainder of the barley cake. All the weary journey through he had been patient and cheerful, the brave little man, never once crying aloud at the pains of his long ride, never once whimpering at the dust that blinded him, or the heat that made him thirsty. Holding on at his father's cap, he had laughed and sung even with the channels still wet on his cheeks where the big drops had rolled from his eyes to his chin.

Little Sunlocks munched at his barley cake in silence, and in the gathering darkness Stephen watched him as he ate. All at once a silvery peal of child's laughter came from within the house, and little Sunlocks dropped the barley cake from his mouth to listen. Again it came; and the grimy face of little Sunlocks lightened to a smile, and that of Stephen Orry lowered and fell.

"Wouldn't you like to live in a house like this, little Sunlocks?"

"Yes – with my father."

Just then the dark door opened again, and the footman, with a taper in his hand, came out to light the lamp in the porch.

"What? Here still?" he said.

"I am; been waiting to see the Governor," Stephen Orry answered.

Then the footman went in, and told the Governor that a big man and a child were sitting in the porch, talking some foreign lingo together, and refusing to go away without seeing His Excellency.

"Bring them in," said the Governor.

Adam Fairbrother was at the dinner table, enveloped in tobacco clouds. His wife, Ruth, had drawn her chair aside that she might knit. Stephen Orry entered slowly with little Sunlocks by the hand.

"This is the person, your Excellency," said the footman.

"Come in, Stephen Orry," said the Governor.

Stephen Orry's face softened at that word of welcome. The footman's dropped and he disappeared.

Then Stephen told his errand. "I shall come to have give you something," he said, trying to speak in English.

Adam's wife raised her eyes and glanced over him. Adam himself laid down his pipe and held out his hand towards Sunlocks. But Stephen held the child back a moment and spoke again.

"It's all I shall have got to give," he said.

"What is it?" said Adam.

"The child," said Stephen, and passed little Sunlocks to Adam's outstretched hand.

At that Adam's wife dropped her knitting to her lap, but Stephen, seeing nothing of the amazement written in her face, went on in his broken words to tell them all – of his wife's life, her death, his own sore temptation, and the voice out of heaven that had called to him. And then with a moistened eye and a glance at Sunlocks, and in a lowered tone as if fearing the child might hear, he spoke of what he meant to do now – of how he would go back to the herrings, and maybe to sea, or perhaps down into the mines, but never again to Port-y-Vullin. And, because a lone man was no company for a child, and could not take a little one with him if he would, he had come to it at last that he must needs part with little Sunlocks, lending him, or maybe giving him, to someone he could trust.

"And so," he said, huskily, "I shall say to me often and often, 'The Governor is a good man and kind to me long, long ago, and I shall give little Sunlocks to him.'"

He had dropped his head into his breast as he spoke, and being now finished he stood fumbling his scraggy goatskin cap.

Then Adam's wife, who had listened in mute surprise, drew herself up, took a long breath, looked first at Stephen, then at Adam, then back at Stephen, and said in a bated whisper —

"Well! Did any living soul ever hear the like in this island before?"

Not rightly understanding what this might mean, poor Stephen looked back at her, in his weak, dazed way, but made her no answer.

"Children might be scarce," she said, and gave a little angry toss of her head.

Still the meaning of what she said had not worked its way through Stephen's slow wit, and he mumbled in his poor blundering fashion:

"He is all I have, ma'am."

"Lord-a-massy, man," she cried, sharply, "but we might have every child in the parish at your price."

Stephen's fingers now clutched at his cap, his parted lips quivered, and again he floundered out, stammering like an idiot:

"But I love him, ma'am, more nor all the world."

"Then I'll thank you to keep him," she answered, hotly; and after that there was dead silence for a moment.

In all Stephen's reckoning never once had he counted on this – that after he had brought himself to that sore pass, at which he could part with Sunlocks and turn his back on him, never more to be cheered by his sunny face and merry tongue, never again to be wakened by him in the morning, never to listen for his gentle breathing in the night, never to feed him and wash him, never to carry him shoulder high, any human creature could say no to him from thought of the little food he would eat or the little trouble he would ask.

Stephen stood a moment, with his poor, bewildered, stupefied face hung down and the great lumps surging hot in his throat, and then, without a word more, he stretched out his hand towards the child.

But all this time Adam had looked on with swimming eyes, and now he drew little Sunlocks yet closer between his knees, and said, quietly:

"Ruth, we are going to keep the little one. Two faggots will burn better than one, and this sweet boy will be company for our little Greeba."

"Adam," she cried, "haven't you children enough of your own, but you must needs take other folks'?"

"Ruth," he answered, "I have six sons, and if they had been twelve, perhaps, I should have been better pleased, so they had all been as strong and hearty; and I have one daughter, and if there had been two it would have suited me as well."

Now the rumor of Stephen Orry's former marriage, which Liza had so zealously set afoot, had reached Government House by way of Lague, and while Stephen had spoken Adam had remembered the story, and thinking of it he had smoothed the head of little Sunlocks with a yet tenderer hand. But Adam's wife, recalling it now, said warmly:

"Maybe you think it wise to bring up your daughter with the merry-begot of any ragabash that comes prowling along from goodness knows where."

"Ruth," said Adam, as quietly as before, "we are going to keep the little one," and at that his wife rose and walked out of the room.

The look of bewilderment had not yet been driven from Stephen Orry's face by the expression of joy that had followed it, and now he stood glancing from Adam to the door and from the door to Adam, as much as to say that if his coming had brought strife he was ready to go. But the Governor waved his hand, as though following his thought and dismissing it. Then lifting the child to his knee, he asked his name, whereupon the little man himself answered promptly that his name was Sunlocks.

"Michael," said Stephen Orry; "but I call him Sunlocks."

"Michael Sunlocks – a good name too. And what is his age?"

"Four years."

"Just the age of my own darling," said the Governor; and setting the child on his feet he rang the bell and said, "Bring little Greeba here."

A minute later a little brown-haired lassie with ruddy cheeks and laughing lips and sparkling brown eyes, came racing into the room. She was in her nightgown, ready for bed, her feet were bare, and under one arm she carried a doll.

"Come here, Greeba veg," said the Governor, and he brought the children face to face, and then stood aside to watch them.

They regarded each other for a moment with the solemn aloofness that only children know, twisting and curling aside, eyeing one another furtively, neither of them seeming so much as to see the other, yet neither seeing anything or anybody else. This little freak of child manners ran its course, and then Sunlocks, never heeding his dusty pinafore, or the little maiden's white nightgown, but glancing down at her bare feet, and seeming to remember that when his own were shoeless someone carried him, stepped up to her, put his arms about her, and with lordly, masculine superiority of strength proceeded to lift her bodily in his arms. The attempt was a disastrous failure, and in another moment the two were rolling over each other on the floor; a result that provoked the little maiden's direst wrath and the blank astonishment of little Sunlocks.

But before the tear-drop of vexation was yet dry on Greeba's face, or the silent bewilderment had gone from the face of Sunlocks, she was holding out her doll in a sidelong way in his direction, as much as to say he might look at it if he liked, only he must not think that she was asking him; and he, nothing loth for her fierce reception of his gallant tender, was devouring the strange sight with eyes full of awe.

Then followed some short inarticulate chirps, and the doll was passed to Sunlocks, who turned the strange thing – such as eyes of his had never beheld – over and over and over, while the little woman brought out from dark corners of the room, and from curious recesses unknown save to her own hands and knees, a slate with a pencil and sponge tied to it by a string, a picture-book whereof the binding hung loose, some bits of ribbon, red and blue, and finally three tiny cups and saucers

with all the accompanying wonder of cream jug and teapot. In three minutes more two little bodies were sitting on their haunches, two little tongues were cackling and gobbling, the room was rippling over with a merry twitter, the strange serious air was gone from the little faces, the little man and the little maid were far away already in the little world of childhood, and all the universe beside was gone, and lost, and forgotten.

Stephen Orry had looked down from his great height at the encounter on the floor, and his dull, slow eyes had filled, for in some way that he could not follow there had come to him at that sweet sight the same deep yearning that had pained him in the boat. And seeing how little Sunlocks was rapt, Stephen struggled hard with himself and said, turning to the Governor:

"Now's the time for me to slip away."

Then they left the room, unnoticed of the busy people on the floor.

Two hours later, after little Sunlocks, having first missed his father, his life's friend and only companion, had cried a little, and soon ceased to cry out of joy of his new comradeship, and had then nestled down his sunny head on the pillow where little Greeba's curly poll also lay, with the doll between him and her, and some marbles in his hand to comfort his heart, Stephen Orry, unable to drag himself away, was tramping the dark roads about the house. He went off at length, and was seen no more at Castletown for many years thereafter.

Now this adoption of Little Sunlocks into the family of the Governor was an incident that produced many effects, and the first of them was the serious estrangement of Adam and his wife. Never had two persons of temperaments so opposed lived so long in outward harmony. Her face, like some mountain country, revealed its before and after. Its spring must have been keen and eager, its summer was overcast, and its winter would be cold and frozen. She was not a Manxwoman, but came of a family of French refugees, settled as advocates on the north of the island. Always vain of show, she had married in her early womanhood, when Adam Fairbrother was newly returned from Barbary, and his adventures abroad were the common gossip and speculation. But Adam had disappointed her ambition at the outset by dropping into the ruts of a homely life. Only once had she lifted him out of them, and that was after twenty years, when the whim and wisdom of the Duke had led him to visit Lague; and then her impatience, her importunity, her fuss and flurry, and appeals in the name of their children, had made him Governor. Meantime, she had borne him six sons in rapid succession during the first ten years of marriage, and after an interval of ten other years she had borne a daughter. Four and twenty years the good man had lived at peace with her, drained of his serenity by her restlessness, and of his unselfishness by her self-seeking. With a wise contempt of trifles, he had kept peace over little things, and the island had long amused itself about his pliant disposition, but now that for the first time he proved unyielding, the island said he was wrong. To adopt a child against the wish of his wife, to take into his family the waif of a drunken woman and an idle foreigner, was an act of stubborn injustice and folly. But Adam held to his purpose, and Michael Sunlocks remained at Government House.

A year passed, and Sunlocks was transformed. No one would have recognized him. The day his father brought him he had been pale under the dust that covered him; he had been timid and had trembled, and his eyes had looked startled, as though he had already been beaten and cuffed and scolded. A child, like a flower, takes the color of the air it breathes, and Sunlocks had not been too young to feel the grimy cold of the atmosphere in which he had been born. But now he had opened like a rose to the sun, and his cheeks were ruddy and his eyes were bright. He had become plump and round and sturdy, and his hair had curled around his head and grown yet warmer of hue, like the plumes of a bird in the love season. And, like a bird, he chirruped the long day through, skipping and tripping and laughing and singing all over the house, idolized by some, beloved by many, caressed by all, even winning upon Mrs. Fairbrother herself, who, whatever her objection to his presence, had not yet steeled herself against his sweetness.

Another year passed, and the children grew together – Sunlocks and Greeba, boy and girl, brother and sister – in the innocent communion of healthy childhood, with their little whims, their little ways, their little tiffs, and with the little sorrows that overcast existence. And Sunlocks picked up his English words as fast as he picked shells on the beach, gathering them on his tongue as he gathered the shells into his pinafore, dropping them and picking them up again.

Yet another year went by, and then over the luminous innocence of the children there crept the strange trail of sex, revealing already their little differences of character, and showing what they were to be in days to come – the little maid, quick, urgent, impulsive and vain; the little man, quiet, unselfish and patient, but liable to outbursts of temper.

A fourth year passed, and then the little people were parted. The Duchess came from London, where her nights had no repose and her days no freshness, to get back a little of the color of the sun into her pallid cheeks, and driving one day from Mount Murray to Government House she lit on Greeba in the road outside Castletown. It was summer, and the little maid of eight, bright as the sunlight that glistened on her head, her cheeks all pink and white, her eyes sparkling under her dark lashes, her brown hair rippling behind her, her frock tucked up in fishwife fashion, her legs bare, and her white linen sunbonnet swinging in her hand, was chasing a butterfly amid the yellow-tipped gorse that grew by the roadside. That vision of beauty and health awakened a memory of less charm and freshness. The Duchess remembered a little maiden of her own who was also eight years old, dainty and pretty, but pale and sickly, peaked up in a chill stone house in London, playing alone with bows and ribbons, talking to herself, and having no companion except a fidgety French governess, who was wrinkled and had lost some of her teeth.

A few days later the Duchess came again to Government House, bought a gay new hat for Greeba, and proposed that the little maid should go home with her as playfellow for her only child. Adam promptly said "No" to her proposal, with what emphasis his courtesy would permit, urging that Greeba, being so much younger than her brothers, was like an only child in the family, and that she was in any case an only daughter. But Adam's wife, thinking she saw her opportunity, found many reasons why Greeba should be allowed to go. For would it be right to cross the wish of so great a lady? – and one, too, who was in a sense their mistress also. And then who could say what the Duchess might do for the child some day? – and in any event wasn't it a chance for which any body else in the island would give both his ears to have his daughter brought up in London, and at the great house of the Duke of Athol?

The end of it was that Adam yielded to his wife now, as he had often yielded before. "But I'll sadly miss my little lassie," he said, "and I much misdoubt but I'll repent me of letting her go."

Yet, while Adam shook his head and looked troubled, the little maid herself was in an ecstasy of delight.

"And would you really like to go to London, Greeba ven?"

"But should I see the carriages, and the ladies on horseback, and the shops, and the little girls in velvet – should I, eh?"

"Maybe so, my ven, maybe so."

"Oh!"

The little maid gave one glance at the infinite splendor of her new bow and feather, and her dark eyes sparkled, while the eyes of her father filled.

"But not Michael Sunlocks, you know, Greeba ven; no, nor mother, nor father."

At that word there was a pretty downward curve of the little lip; but life had no real sorrow for one with such a hat and such a prospect, and the next instant the bright eyes leapt again to the leaping heart.

"Then run away, Greeba ven – run."

The little maiden took her father at his word, though it was but sadly spoken, and bounded off in chase of Michael Sunlocks, that she might tell him the great news. She found him by the old wooden bridge of the Silver Burn near the Malew Church.

Michael Sunlocks had lately struck up a fast friendship with the carrier, old crazy Chalse A'Killey, who sometimes lent him his donkey for a ride. Bareheaded, barefooted, with breeches rolled up above the knees, his shoes and stockings swung about his neck, and his wavy yellow hair rough and tangled, Michael Sunlocks was now seated bareback on this donkey, tugging the rope that served it for curb and snaffle, and persuading it, by help of a blackthorn stick, to cross the river to the meadow opposite. And it was just when the donkey, a creature of becoming meekness and most venerable age, was reflecting on these arguments, and contemplating the water at his shoes with a pensive eye, that Greeba, radiant in the happiness of her marvellous hat, came skipping on to the bridge.

In a moment she blurted out her news between many gusts of breath, and Michael Sunlocks, pausing from his labors, sat on his docile beast and looked up at her with great wonder in his wide blue eyes.

"And I shall see the carriages, and the ladies on horseback, and the ships, and the waxworks, and the wild beasts."

The eyes of Sunlocks grew hazy and wet, but the little maiden rattled on, cocking her eye down as she spoke at her reflection in the smooth river, for it took a world of glances to grow familiar with the marvel that sat on her head.

"And I shall wear velvet frocks, and have new hats often and lots of goodies and things; and – and didn't I always say a good fairy would come for me some day?"

"What are you talking of, you silly?" said Michael Sunlocks.

"I'm not a silly, and I'm going away, and you are not; and I'll have girls to play with now, not boys – there!"

Michael Sunlocks could bear no more. His eyes overflowed, but his cheeks reddened, and he said —

"What do I care, you stupid? You can go if you like," and then down came his stick with a sounding thwack on the donkey's flank.

Now startled out of all composure by such sudden and summary address, the beast threw up his hinder legs and ducked down his head, and tumbled his rider into the water. Michael Sunlocks scrambled to his feet, all dripping wet, but with eyes aflame and his little lips set hard, and then laid hold of the rope bridle and tugged with one hand, while with the stick in the other he cudgelled the donkey until he had forced it to cross the river.

While this tough work was going forward, Greeba, who had shrieked at Michael's fall, stood trembling with clasped hands on the bridge, and, when all was over, the little man turned to her with high disdain, and said, after a mighty toss of his glistening wet head:

"Did you think I was drowned, you silly? Why don't you go, if you're going?"

Not all the splendor of bow and feather could help the little maiden to withstand indifference like this, so her lip fell, and she said:

"Well, you needn't say so, if you *are* glad I'm going."

And Sunlocks answered, "Who says I'm glad? Not that I say I'm not, neither," he added quickly, leaping astride his beast again.

Whereupon Greeba said, "If *you* had been going away *I* should have cried," and then, to save herself from bursting out in his very face, she turned about quickly and fled.

"But I'm not such a silly, I'm not," Michael Sunlocks shouted after her, and down came another thwack on the donkey, and away he sped across the meadow. But before he had ridden far he drew rein and twisted about, and now his blue eyes were swimming once more.

"Greeba," he called, and his little voice broke, but no answer came back to him.

"Greeba," he called again, more loudly, but Greeba did not stop.

"Greeba!" he shouted with all his strength. "Greeba! Greeba!"

But the little maid had gone, and there was no response. The bees were humming in the gold of the gorse, and the fireflies were buzzing about the donkey's ears, while the mountains were fading away into a dim wet haze.

Half an hour later the carriage of the Duchess drove out through the iron gates of Government House, and the little maiden seated in it by the side of the stately lady, was crying in a voice of childlike grief —

"Sunlocks! Sunlocks! Little Sunlocks!"

The advantage which the Governor's wife proposed to herself in parting with her daughter she never gained, and one of the secret ends of her life was thereby not only disappointed but defeated; for while the Duchess did nothing for Greeba, the girl's absence from home led Adam to do the more for Michael Sunlocks. Deprived of his immediate object of affection, his own little maiden, Adam lavished his love on the stranger whom chance had brought to his door; being first prompted thereto by the thought, which came only when it was too late, that in sending Greeba away to be company to some other child he had left poor little Sunlocks at home to be sole company to himself.

But Michael Sunlocks soon won for himself the caresses that were once due merely to pity of his loneliness, and Adam's heart went out to him with the strong affection of a father. He throve, he grew — a tall, lithe, round-limbed lad, with a smack of the man in his speech and ways, and all the strong beauty of a vigorous woman in his face. Year followed year, his school days came and went, he became more and yet more the Governor's quick right hand, his pen and his memory, even his judgment, and the staff he leaned on. It was "Michael Sunlocks" here, and "Michael Sunlocks" there, and "Michael Sunlocks will see to that," and "You may safely leave it to Michael Sunlocks;" and meantime the comely and winsome lad, with man's sturdy independence of spirit, but a woman's yearning for love, having long found where this account lay in the house of Governor Fairbrother, clung to that good man with more than the affection, because less than the confidence, of a son, and like a son he stood to him.

Now, for one who found this relation sweet and beautiful, there were many who found it false and unjust, implying an unnatural preference of a father for a stranger before his own children; and foremost among those who took this unfavorable view were Mrs. Fairbrother and her sons. She blamed her husband, and they blamed Michael Sunlocks.

The six sons of Adam Fairbrother had grown into six rude men, all big, lusty fellows, rough and hungry, seared and scarred like the land they lived on, but differing much at many points. Asher, the eldest, three-and-thirty when Sunlocks was fifteen, was fair, with gray eyes, flabby face, and no chin to speak of, good-hearted, but unstable as water. He was for letting the old man and the lad alone. "Aisy, man, aisy, what's the odds?" he would say, in his drawling way of speaking. But Ross, the second son, and Stean, the third, both cruel and hot-blooded men, reproached Asher with not objecting from the first, for "Och," they would say, "one of these fine days the ship will be wrecked and scuttled before yer very eyes, and not a pound of cargo left at her; and all along of that cursed young imp that's after sniffin' and sniffin' abaft of the ould man," — a figure of speech which meant that Adam would will his belongings to Michael Sunlocks. And at that conjecture, Thurstan, the fourth son, a black-bearded fellow in top boots, always red-eyed with much drinking, but strong of will and the ruler of his brethren, would say, "Aw, well, let the little beachcomber keep his weather eye liftin'!" and Jacob, the fifth son, sandy as a fox, and as sly and watchful, and John, the youngest, known as Gentleman Johnny, out of tribute to his love of dress, would shake their heads together, and hint that they would yet find a way to cook the goose of any smooth-faced hypocrite shamming Abraham.

Many a device they tried to get Michael Sunlocks turned away. They brought bad stories of his father, Stephen Orry, now a name of terror to good people from north to south of the island, a secret trader running between the revenue cutters in the ports and the smugglers outside, perhaps a wrecker haunting the rough channels of the Calf, an outlaw growing rich by crime, and, maybe, by blood.

The evil rumors made no impression on old Adam, but they produced a powerful effect where no effect had been expected. Bit by bit, as his heart went out to the Governor, there grew upon Michael Sunlocks a deep loathing of the very name and thought of his father. The memory of his father was now a thing of the mind, not the affections; and the chain of the two emotions, love for his foster father and dread of his natural one, slowly but surely tightened about him, so that his strongest hope was that he might never again set eyes on Stephen Orry. By this weakness he fell at length into the hands of the six Fairbrothers, and led the way to a total rupture of old Adam's family.

One day when Michael Sunlocks was eighteen years old a man came to him from Kirk Maughold with an air of wondrous mystery. It was Nary Crowe, the innkeeper, now bald, bottled-nosed, and in a bad state of preservation. His story, intended for Michael's ear alone, was that Stephen Orry, flying from the officers of the revenue cutters, was on the point of leaving the island forever, and must see his son before going. If the son would not go to the father, then the father must come to the son. The meeting place proposed was a schooner lying outside the Calf Sound, and the hour midnight of the day following.

It was as base a plot as the heart of an enemy ever concocted, for the schooner was a smuggler, and the men of the revenue cutter were in hiding under the Black Head to watch her movements. The lad, in fear of his father, fell into the trap, and was taken prisoner on suspicion in a gig making for the ship. He confessed all to the Governor, and Nary Crowe was arrested. To save his own carcass Nary gave up his employers. They were Ross and Stean Fairbrother, and Ross and Stean being questioned pointed to their brothers Jacob and Gentleman Johnny as the instigators of the scheme.

When the revelation was complete, and the Governor saw that all but his whole family was implicated, and that the stain on his house was so black that the island would ever remember it against him, his placid spirit forsook him and his wrath knew no bounds. But the evil was not ended there, for Mrs. Fairbrother took sides with her sons, and straightway vowed to live no longer under the same roof with an unnatural father, who found water thicker than blood.

At that Adam was shaken to his depths. The taunt passed him by, but the threat touched him sorely.

"It would be but a poor business," he said, "to part now after so many years of life together, with seven children that should be as bonds between us, in our age and looking to a longer parting."

But Mrs. Fairbrother was resolved to go with her sons, and never again to darken her husband's doors.

"You have been a true wife to me and led a good life," said Adam, "and have holpen me through many troubles, and we have had cheerful hours together despite some crosses."

But Mrs. Fairbrother was not to be pacified.

"Then let us not part in anger," said Adam, "and though I will not do your bidding, and send away the lad – no, nor let him go of himself, now that for sake of peace he asks it – yet to show you that I mean no wrong by my own flesh and blood, this is what I will do: I have my few hundreds for my office, but all I hold that I can call my own is Lague. Take it – it shall be yours for your lifetime, and our sons' and their sister's after you."

At these terms the bad bargain was concluded, and Mrs. Fairbrother went away to Lague, leaving Adam with Michael Sunlocks at Government House.

And the old man, being now alone with the lad, though his heart never wavered or rued the price he had paid for him, often turned yearningly towards thoughts of his daughter Greeba, so that at length he said, speaking of her as the child he had parted from, "I can live no longer without my little lass, and will go and fetch her."

Then he wrote to the Duchess at her house in London, and a few days afterwards he followed his letter.

He had been a week gone when Michael Sunlocks, having now the Governor's routine work to do, was sent for out of the north of the island to see to the light on the Point of Ayre, where there

was then no lighthouse, but only a flase stuck out from a pole at the end of a sandstone jetty, a poor proxy, involving much risk to ships. Two days he was away, and returning home he slept a night at Douglas, rising at sunrise to make the last stage of his journey to Castletown. He was riding Goldie, the Governor's little roan; the season was spring, and the morning, fresh from its long draught of dew, was sweet and beautiful. But Michael Sunlocks rode heavily along, for he was troubled by many misgivings. He was asking himself for the hundredth time whether it was right of him, and a true man's part, to suffer himself to stand between Adam Fairbrother and his family. The sad breach being made, all that he could do to heal it was to take himself away, whether Adam favored that course or not. And he had concluded that, painful as the remedy would be, yet he must needs take it, and that very speedily, when he came up to the gate of Government House, and turned Goldie down the path to the left that led to the stables.

He had not gone far when over the lowing of the cattle in the byres, and the steady munching of the sheep on the other side of the hedge, and through the smell of the early grass there came to him the sweetest sounds he had ever heard, and some of the queerest and craziest. Without knowing what he did, or why he did it, but taking himself at his first impulse, he drew rein, and Goldie came to a stand on the mossgrown pathway. Then he knew that two were talking together a little in front of him, but partly hidden by a turn of the path and the thick trammon that bordered it. Rising in his stirrups he could see one of them, and it was his old friend, Chalse A'Killey, the carrier, a shambling figure in a guernsey and blue seaman's cap, with tousled hair and a simple vacant face, and lagging lower lip, but eyes of a strange brightness.

And "Aw, yes," Chalse was saying, "he's a big lump of a boy grown, and no pride at all, at all, and a fine English tongue at him, and clever extraordinary. Him and me's same as brothers, and he was mortal fond to ride my ould donkey when he was a slip of a lad. Aw, yes, him and me's middlin' well acquent."

Then some linnets that were hiding in the trammon began to twitter, and what was said next Michael Sunlocks did not catch, but only heard the voice that answered old Chalse, and that seemed to make the music of the birds sound harsh.

"'What like is he?' Is it like it is?" old Chalse said again. "Aw, straight as the backbone of a herrin' and tall and strong; and as for a face, maybe there's not a man in the island to hold a candle to him. Och, no, nor a woman neither – saving yourself, maybe. And aw, now, the sweet and tidy ye're looking this morning, anyway: as fresh as the dewdrop, my chree."

Goldie grew restless, began to paw the path, and twist his round flanks into the leaves of the trammon, and at the next instant Michael Sunlocks was aware that there was a flutter in front of him, and a soft tread on the silent moss, and before he could catch back the lost consciousness of that moment, a light and slender figure shot out with a rhythm of gentle movement, and stood in all its grace and lovely sweetness two paces beyond the head of his horse.

"Greeba!" thought Michael Sunlocks; and sure enough it was she, in the first bloom of her womanhood, with gleams of her child face haunting her still and making her woman's face luminous, with the dark eyes softened and the dimpled cheeks smoothed out. She was bareheaded, and the dark fall of her hair was broken over her ears by eddies of wavy curls. Her dress was very light and loose, and it left the proud lift of her throat bare, as well as the tower of her round neck, and a hint of the full swell of her bosom.

In a moment Michael Sunlocks dropped from the saddle, and held out his hand to Greeba, afraid to look into her face as yet, and she put out her hand to him and blushed: both frightened more than glad. He tried to speak, but never a word would come, and he felt his cheeks burn red. But her eyes were shy of his, and nothing she saw but the shadow of Michael's tall form above her and a glint of the uncovered shower of fair hair that had made him Sunlocks. She turned her eyes aside a moment, then quickly recovered herself and laughed a little, partly to hide her own confusion and

partly in joy at the sight of his, and all this time he held her hand, arrested by a sudden gladness, such as comes with the first sunshine of spring and the scent of the year's first violet.

There was then the harsh scrape on the path of old Chalse A'Killey's heavy feet going off, and, the spell being broken, Greeba was the first to speak.

"You were glad when I went away – are you sorry that I have come back again?"

But his breath was gone and he could not answer, so he only laughed, and pulled the reins of the horse over its head and walked before it by Greeba's side as she turned towards the stable. In the cowhouse the kine were lowing, over the half-door a calf held out his red and white head and munched and munched, on the wall a peacock was strutting, and across the paved yard the two walked together, Greeba and Michael Sunlocks, softly, without words, with quick glances and quicker blushes.

Adam Fairbrother saw them from a window of the house, and he said within himself, "Now God grant that this may be the end of all partings between them and me." That chanced to be the day before Good Friday, and it was only three days afterwards that Adam sent for Michael Sunlocks to see him in his room.

Sunlocks obeyed, and found a strange man with the Governor. The stranger was of more than middle age, rough of dress, bearded, tanned, of long flaxen hair, an ungainly but colossal creature. When they came face to face, the face of Michael Sunlocks fell, and that of the man lightened visibly.

"This is your son, Stephen Orry," said old Adam, in a voice that trembled and broke. "And this is your father, Michael Sunlocks."

Then Stephen Orry, with a depth of languor in his slow gray eyes, made one step towards Michael Sunlocks, and half opened his arms as if to embrace him. But a pitiful look of shame crossed his face at that moment, and his arms fell again. At the same instant Michael Sunlocks, growing very pale and dizzy, drew slightly back, and they stood apart, with Adam between them.

"He has come for you to go away into his own country," Adam said, falteringly.

It was Easter Day, nineteen years after Stephen Orry had fled from Iceland.

CHAPTER VII.

The Vow of Stephen Orry

Stephen Orry's story was soon told. He desired that his son, being now of an age that suited it, should go to the Latin school at Reykjavik, to study there under old Bishop Petersen, a good man whom all Icelanders venerated, and he himself had known from his childhood up. He could bear the expense of it, and saying so he hung his head a little. An Irish brig, hailing from Belfast, and bound for Reykjavik, was to put in at Ramsey on the Saturday following. By that brig he wished his son to sail. He should be back at the little house in Port-y-Vullin between this and then, and he desired to see his son there, having something of consequence to say to him. That was all. Fumbling his cap, the great creature shambled out, and was gone before the others were aware.

Then Michael Sunlocks declared stoutly that come what might he would not go. Why should he? Who was this man that he should command his obedience? His father? Then what, as a father, had he done for him? Abandoned him to the charity of others. What was he? One whom he had thought of with shame, hoping never to set eyes on his face. And now, this man, this father, this thing of shame, would have him sacrifice all that was near and dear to him, and leave behind the only one who had been, indeed, his father, and the only place that had been, in truth, his home. But no, that base thing he should not do. And, saying this, Michael Sunlocks tossed his head proudly, though there was a great gulp in his throat and his shrill voice had risen to a cry.

And to all this rush of protest old Adam, who had first stared out at the window with a look of sheer bewilderment, and then sat before the fire to smoke, trying to smile though his mouth would not bend, and to say something more though there seemed nothing to say, answered only in a thick under-breath, "He is your father, my lad, he is your father."

Hearing this again and again repeated, even after he had fenced it with many answers, Michael Sunlocks suddenly bethought himself of all that had so lately occurred, and the idea came to him in the whirl of his stunned senses that perhaps the Governor wished him to go, now that they could part without offence or reproach on either side. At that bad thought his face fell, and though little given to woman's ways he had almost flung himself at old Adam's feet to pray of him not to send him away whatever happened, when all at once he remembered his vow of the morning. What had come over him since he made that vow, that he was trying to draw back now? He thought of Greeba, of the Governor, and again of Greeba. Had the coming of Greeba altered all? Was it because Greeba was back home that he wished to stay? Was it for that the Governor wished him to go, needing him now no more? He did not know, he could not think; only the hot flames rose to his cheeks and the hot tears to his eyes, and he tossed his head again mightily proudly, and said as stoutly as ever, "Very well – very well – I'll go – since you wish it."

Now old Adam saw but too plainly what mad strife was in the lad's heart to be wroth with him for all the ingratitude of his thought, so, his wrinkled face working hard with many passions – sorrow and tenderness, yearning for the lad and desire to keep him, pity for the father robbed of the love of his son, who felt an open shame of him – the good man twisted about from the fire and said, "Listen, and you shall hear what your father has done for you."

And then, with a brave show of composure, though many a time his old face twitched and his voice faltered, and under his bleared spectacles his eyes blinked, he told Michael Sunlocks the story of his infancy – how his father, a rude man, little used to ways of tenderness, had nursed him when his mother, being drunken and without natural feelings, had neglected him; how his father had tried to carry him away and failed for want of the license allowing them to go; how at length, in dread of what might come to the child, yet loving him fondly, he had concluded to kill him, and had taken him out to sea in the boat to do it, but could not compass it from terror of the voice that seemed to speak within him, and from pity of the child's own artless prattle; and, last of all, how his father had

brought him there to that house, not abandoning him to the charity of others, but yielding him up reluctantly, and as one who gave away in solemn trust the sole thing he held dear in all the world.

And pleading in this way for Stephen Orry, poor old Adam was tearing at his own heart woefully, little wishing that his words would prevail, yet urging them the more for the secret hope that, in spite of all, Michael Sunlocks, like the brave lad he was, would after all refuse to go. But Michael, who had listened impatiently at first, tramping the room to and fro, paused presently, and his eyes began to fill and his hands to tremble. So that when Adam, having ended, said, "Now, will you not go to Iceland?" thinking in his heart that the lad would fling his arms about him and cry, "No, no, never, never," and he himself would then answer, "My boy, my boy, you shall stay here, you shall stay here," Michael Sunlocks, his heart swelling and his eyes glistening with a great new pride and tenderness, said softly, "Yes, yes – for a father like that I would cross the world."

Adam Fairbrother said not a word more. He blew out the candle that shone on his face, sat down before the fire, and through three hours thereafter smoked in silence.

The next day, being Monday, Greeba was sent on to Lague, that her mother and brothers might see her after her long absence from the island. She was to stay there until the Monday following, that she might be at Ramsey to bid good-bye to Michael Sunlocks on the eve of his departure for Iceland.

Three days more Michael spent at Government House, and on the morning of Friday, being fully ready and his leather trunk gone on before in care of Chalse A'Killey, who would suffer no one else to carry it, he was mounted for his journey on the little roan Goldie when up came the Governor astride his cob.

"I'll just set you as far as Ballasalla," he said, jauntily, and they rode away together.

All the week through since their sad talk on Easter Day old Adam had affected a wondrous cheerfulness, and now he laughed mightily as they rode along, and winked his gray eyes knowingly like a happy child's, until sometimes from one cause or other the big drops came into them. The morning was fresh and sweet, with the earth full of gladness and the air of song, though Michael Sunlocks was little touched by its beauty and thought it the heaviest he had yet seen. But Adam told how the spring was toward, and the lambs in fold, and the heifers thriving, and how the April rain would bring potatoes down to sixpence a kishen, and fetch up the grass in such a crop that the old island would rise – why not? ha, ha, ha! – to the opulence and position of a State.

But, rattle on as he would, he could neither banish the heavy looks of Michael Sunlocks nor make light the weary heart he bore himself. So he began to rally the lad, and say how little he would have thought of a trip to Iceland in his old days at Guinea; that it was only a hop, skip and a jump after all, and, bless his old soul, if he wouldn't cut across some day to see him between Tynwald and Midsummer – and many a true word was said in jest.

Soon they came by Rushen Abbey at Ballasalla, and then old Adam could hold back no longer what he had come to say.

"You'll see your father before you sail," he said, "and I'm thinking he'll give you a better reason for going than he has given to me; but, if not, and Bishop Petersen and the Latin School is all his end and intention, remember our good Manx saying that 'learning is fine clothes to the rich man, and riches to the poor one.' And that minds me," he said, plunging deep into his pocket, "of another good Manx saying, that 'there are just two bad pays – pay beforehand and no pay at all;' so to save you from both, who have earned yourself neither, put you this old paper into your fob – and God bless ye!"

So saying, he thrust into the lad's hand a roll of fifty Manx pound notes, and then seemed about to whip away. But Michel Sunlocks had him by the sleeve before he could turn his horse's head.

"Bless me yourself," the lad said.

And then Adam Fairbrother, with all his poor bankrupt whimses gone from his upturned face, now streaming wet, and with his white hair gently lifted by the soft morning breeze, rose in the saddle and laid his hand on Michael's drooping head and blessed him. And so they parted, not soon to meet again, or until many a strange chance had befallen both.

It was on the morning of the day following that Michael Sunlocks rode into Port-y-Vullin. If he could have remembered how he had left it, as an infant in his father's arms, perhaps the task he had set himself would have been an easier one. He was trying to crush down his shame, and it was very hard to do. He was thinking that go where he would he must henceforth bear his father's name.

Stephen Orry was waiting for him, having been there three days, not living in the little hut, but washing it, cleaning it, drying it, airing it, and kindling fires in it, that by such close labor of half a week it might be worthy that his son should cross its threshold for half an hour. He had never slept in it since he had nailed up the door after the death of Liza Killey, and as an unblessed place it had been safe from the intrusion of others.

He saw Michael Sunlocks riding up, and raised his cap to him as he alighted, saying, "Sir" to him, and bowing as he did so. There were deep scars on his face and head, his hands were scratched and discolored, his cheeks were furrowed with wrinkles, and about his whole person there was a strong odor as of tobacco, tar, and bilge water.

"I shall not have ought to ask you here, sir," he said, in his broken English.

"Call me Michael," the lad answered, and then they went into the hut.

The place was not much more cheerful than of old, but still dark, damp and ruinous; and Michael Sunlocks, at the thought that he himself had been born there, and that his mother had lived her shameful life and died her dishonored death there, found the gall again in his throat.

"I have something that I shall have to say to you," said Stephen Orry, "but I cannot well speak English. Not all the years through I never shall have learn it." And then, as if by a sudden thought, he spoke six words in his native Icelandic, and glanced quickly into the face of Michael Sunlocks.

At the next instant the great rude fellow was crying like a child. He had seen that Michael understood him. And Michael, on his part, seemed at the sound of those words to find something melt at his heart, something fall from his eyes, something rise to his throat.

"Call me Michael," he said once more. "I am your son;" and then they talked together, Stephen Orry in the Icelandic, Michael Sunlocks in English.

"I've not been a good father to you, Michael, never coming to see you all these years. But I wanted you to grow up a better man than your father before you. A man may be bad, but he doesn't like his son to feel ashamed of him. And I was afraid to see it in your face, Michael. That's why I stayed away. But many a time I felt hungry after my little lad, that I loved so dear and nursed so long, like any mother might. And hearing of him sometimes, and how well he looked, and how tall he grew, maybe I didn't think the less about him for not coming down upon him to shame him."

"Stop, father, stop," said Michael Sunlocks.

"My son," said Stephen Orry, "you are going back to your father's country. It's nineteen years since he left it, and he hadn't lived a good life there. You'll meet many a one your father knew, and, maybe, some your father did wrong by. He can't undo the bad work now. There's a sort of wrongdoing there's no mending once it's done, and that's the sort his was. It was against a woman. Some people seem to be sent into this world to be punished for the sins of others. Women are mostly that way, though there are those that are not; but she was one of them. It'll be made up to them in the other world; and if she has gone there she has taken some of my sins along with her own – if she had any, and I never heard tell of any. But if she is in this world still, perhaps it can be partly made up to her here. Only it is not for me to do it, seeing what has happened since. Michael, that's why you are going to my country now."

"Tell me everything," said Michael.

Then Stephen Orry, his deep voice breaking and his gray eyes burning with the slow fire that had lain nineteen years asleep at the bottom of them, told his son the story of his life – of Rachel and of her father and her father's curse, of what she had given up and suffered for him, and of how he had repaid her with neglect, with his mother's contempt, and with his own blow. Then of her threat and his flight and his coming to that island; of his meeting with Liza, of his base marriage with

the woman and the evil days they spent together; of their child's birth and his own awful resolve in his wretchedness and despair; and then of the woman's death, wherein the Almighty God had surely turned to mercy what was meant for vengeance. All this he told and more than this, sparing himself not at all. And Michael listened with a bewildered sense of fear and shame, and love and sorrow, that may not be described, growing hot and cold by turns, rising from his seat and sinking back again, looking about the walls with a chill terror, as the scenes they had witnessed seemed to come back to them before his eyes, feeling at one moment a great horror of the man before him, and at the next a great pity, and then clutching his father's huge hands in his own nervous fingers.

"Now you know all," said Stephen Orry, "and why it is not for me to go back to her. There is another woman between us, God forgive me, and dead though she is, that woman will be there forever. But she, who is yonder, in my own country, if she is living, is my wife. And heaven pity her, she is where I left her – down, down, down among the dregs of life. She has no one to protect and none to help her. She is deserted for her father's sake, and despised for mine. Michael, will you go to her?"

The sudden question recalled the lad from a painful reverie. He had been thinking of his own position, and that even his father's name, which an hour ago he had been ashamed to bear, was not his own to claim. But Stephen Orry had never once thought of this, or that the dead woman who stood between him and Rachel also stood between Rachel and her son.

"Promise me, promise me," he cried, seeing one thing only – that Michael was his son, that his son was as himself, and that the woman who was dead had been as a curse to both of them.

But Michael Sunlocks made him no answer.

"I've gone from bad to worse – I know that, Michael. I've done in cold blood what I'd have trembled at when she was by me. Maybe I was thinking sometimes of my boy even then, and saying to myself how some day he'd go back for me to my own country, when I had made the money to send him."

Michael trembled visibly.

"And how he'd look for her, and find her, and save her, if she was alive. And if she wasn't – if she was dead, poor girl, with all her troubles over, how he'd look for the child that was to come when I left her – my child, and hers – and find it where it would surely be, in want and dirt and misery, and then save it for its mother's sake and mine. Michael, will you go?"

But still Michael Sunlocks made him no answer.

"It's fourteen years since God spared your life to me; just fourteen years to-night, Michael. I remembered it, and that's why we are here now. When I brought you back in my arms *she* was there at my feet, lying dead, who had been my rod and punishment. Then I vowed, as I should answer to the Lord at the last day, that if *I* could not go back, *you* should."

Michael covered his face with hands.

"My son, my son – Michael, my little Sunlocks, I want to keep my vow. Will you go?"

"Yes, yes," cried Michael, rising suddenly. His doubt and pride and shame were gone. He felt only a great tenderness now for the big rude man, who had sinned deeply and suffered much and found that all he could do alone would avail him nothing.

"Father, where is she?"

"I left her at Reykjavik, but I don't know where she is now."

"No matter, I will hunt the world over until I find her, and when I have found her I will be as a son to her, and she shall be as a mother to me."

"My boy, my boy," cried Stephen.

"If she should die, and we should never meet, I will hunt the world over until I find her child, and when I have found it I will be as a brother to it for my father's sake."

"My son, my son," cried Stephen. And in the exultation of that moment, when he tried to speak but no words would come, and only his rugged cheeks glistened and his red eyes shone, it seemed to Stephen Orry that the burden of twenty heavy years had been lifted away.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Going of Sunlocks

It was then past noon. The Irish brig was in the harbor taking in Manx cloth and potatoes, a few cattle and a drove of sheep. At the flow of the tide it was to go out into the bay and anchor there, waiting for the mails, and at nine o'clock it was to sail. In the meantime Michael was to arrange for his passage, and at half-past eight he was to meet his father on the quay.

But he had also to see Greeba, and that was not easy to do. The family at Lague had heard the great news of his going, and had secretly rejoiced at it, but they refused to see him there, even for the shortest leave-taking at the longest parting. And at the bare mention of the bargain that Greeba had made with him, to bid him farewell on the eve of his departure, all the Fairbrothers were up in arms. So he had been sorely put to it to devise a means of meeting Greeba, if he could do so without drawing suspicion down on her; for come what might of risk or danger to himself he meant to see her again before ever he set foot on the ship. The expedient he could not hit on did not long elude a woman's wit, and Greeba found the way by which they were to meet.

A few of last year's heifers were grazing on Barrule and at nightfall somebody went up for them and brought them home. She would go that night, and return by the glen, so that at the bridge by the turn of the river and the low road to Lague, where it was quiet enough sometimes, she could meet anybody about dusk and nobody be the wiser. She contrived a means to tell Michael of this, and he was prompt to her appointment.

The day had been fair but close, with a sky that hung low, and with not a breath of wind, and in the evening when the mist came down from the mountain a fog came up from the sea, so that the air was empty and every noise went through it as if it had been a speaking-trumpet. Standing alone on the bridge under the quiet elms, Michael could hear the rattle of chains and the whistling of horns, and by that he knew that the brig had dropped anchor in the bay. But he strained his ears for other sounds, and they came at last; the thud of the many feet of the heifers, the flapping of their tails, the cattle-call in a girl's clear voice, and the swish of a twig that she carried in her hand.

Greeba came along behind the cattle, swinging her body to a jaunty gait, her whole person radiant with health and happiness, her long gown, close at the back and loose over her bosom, showing well her tall lithe form and firm bearing. She wore no bonnet, but a white silk handkerchief was tied about her head, half covering her mouth, and leaving visible in the twilight only the tip of her nose, a curl of her hair, and her bright dark eyes, with their long bright lashes. She was singing to herself as she came up to the bridge, with an unconcerned and unconscious air. At sight of Michael she made a start and a little nervous cry, so that he thought, poor lad, not knowing the ways of women, that for all the pains she had been at to fetch him she had somehow not expected him to be there.

She looked him over from head to foot, and her eyes gleamed from the white kerchief.

"So you are going, after all," she said, and her voice seemed to him the sweetest music he had ever heard. "I never believed you would," she added.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know," she said, and laughed a little. "But I suppose there are girls enough in Iceland," and then she laughed outright. "Only they can't be of much account up there."

"But I've heard they are very fine girls," he answered; "and it's a fine country, too."

She tossed her head and laughed and swung her switch.

"Fine country! The idea! Fine company, fine people and a good time. That's what a girl wants if she's worth anything."

"Then I suppose you will go back to London some day," he said.

"That doesn't follow," she answered. "There's father, you see; and, oh, what a pity he can't live at Lague!"

"Do you like it so much?" he said.

"Like it?" she said, her eyes full of laughter. "Six big hungry brothers coming home three times a day and eating up everything in the house – it's delightful!"

She seemed to him magnificently beautiful.

"I dare say they'll spoil you before I come back," he said, "or somebody else will."

She gave him a deliberate glance from her dark eyes, and then threw back her head and laughed. He could see the heaving of her breast. She laughed again – a fresh, merry laugh – and then he tried to laugh too, thinking of the foolish thing he had said.

"But if there are plenty of girls up there," she said, slyly glancing under her long lashes, "and they're so very wonderful, maybe you'll be getting married before you come home again?"

"Maybe so," he said quietly, and looked vacantly aside.

There was a pause. Then a sharp snap or two broke the silence and recalled him to the maiden by his side. She was only breaking up the twig she had carried.

There was another pause, in which he could hear the rippling of the river and the leaping of a fish. The heifers were munching the grass by the roadside a little ahead.

"I must go now," she said, coldly, "or they'll be out seeking me."

"I'll walk with you as far as Lague – it's dark," he said.

"No, no, you must not!" she cried, and fumbling the loose fold about her throat she turned to go. But he laid hold of her arm.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Only think of my brothers. Your very life would be in danger."

"If all six of them were ranged across the other end of this bridge, and you had to walk the rest of the road alone, I would go through them," he said.

She saw the high lift of his neck and she smiled proudly. Then they walked on some distance. He was gazing at her in silence. There was a conscious delight of her beauty in the swing of her step and the untamed glance of her eyes.

"Since the country is so fine I suppose you'll stay a long while there?" she said in her sweetest tone.

"No longer than I must," he answered.

"Why not?"

"I don't know."

"But why not?" she said again, looking at him sideways with a gleam of a smile.

He did not answer, and she laughed merrily.

"What a girl you are for laughing," he said. "It may be very laughable to you that I'm going away –"

"But isn't it to you? Eh?" she said, as fast as a flash of quicksilver.

He had no answer, so he tried to laugh also, and to take her hand at the same time. She was too quick for him, and swung half a pace aside. They were then at the gate of Lague, where long years before Stephen Orry first saw the light through the elms. A late rook was still cawing overhead; the heifers had gone on towards the courtyard.

"You must go now, so good-bye," she said, softly.

"Greeba," he said.

"Well? Only speak lower," she whispered, coming closer. He could feel the warm glow of her body.

"Do you think, now, if I should be a long time away – years it may be, perhaps many years – we should ever forget each other, we two?"

"Forget? No, not to say forget, you know," she answered.

"But should we remember?"

"Remember? You silly, silly boy, if we should not forget how ever could we fail to remember?"

"Don't laugh at me, Greeba; and promise me one thing," and then he whispered in her ear. She sprang away and laughed once more, and started to run down the path. But in three strides he had her again.

"That will not do for me, Greeba," he said breathing fast. "Promise me that you will wait for me."

"Well," she said softly, her dark eyes full of merriment, "I'll promise that while you are away no one else shall spoil me. There! Good-bye!"

She was tearing herself out of his hands.

"First give me a token," he said.

Daffodils lined the path, though in the dusk he could not see them. But she knew they were there, and stopped and plucked two, blew upon both, gave one to him, and put the other into the folds at her bosom.

"Good-bye! Good-bye!" she said in an under-breath.

"Good-bye!" he answered.

She ran a few steps, but he could not let her go yet, and in an instant he sprang abreast of her. He threw one arm about her waist and the other about her neck, tipped up her chin, and kissed her on the lips. A gurgling laugh came up to him.

"Remember!" he whispered over the upturned face in the white kerchief.

At the next instant he was gone. Then, standing under the dark elms alone, she heard the porch door opening, a heavy foot treading on the gravel, and a deep voice saying: "Here are the heifers home, but where's the little lass?"

It was her eldest brother, Asher, and she walked up to him and said quite calmly: —

"Oh! what a bad hasp that gate has – it takes such a time to open and close."

Michael Sunlocks reached the harbor at the time appointed. As he crossed the quay some fishermen were lounging there with pipes between their teeth. A few of them came up to him to bid him Godspeed in their queer way.

Stephen Orry was standing apart by the head of the harbor steps, and at the bottom of them his boat, a yawl, was lying moored. They got into it and Stephen sculled out of the harbor. It was still very thick over the town, but they could see the lights of the Irish brig in the bay. Outside the pier the air was fresher, and there was something of a swell on the water.

"The fog is lifting," said Stephen Orry. "There'll be a taste of a breeze before long."

He seemed as if he had something to say but did not know how to begin. His eye caught the light on Point of Ayre.

"When are they to build the lighthouse?" he asked.

"After the spring tides," said Michael.

They were about midway between the pier and the brig when Stephen rested his scull under his arm and drew something from one of his pockets.

"This is the money," he said, and he held out a bag towards Michael Sunlocks.

"No," said Michael, and he drew quickly back.

There was a moment's silence, and then Michael added, more softly: —

"I mean, father, that I have enough already. Mr. Fairbrother gave me some. It was fifty pounds."

Stephen Orry turned his head aside and looked over the dark water. Then he said: —

"I suppose that was so that you wouldn't need to touch money same as mine."

Michael's heart smote him. "Father," he said, "how much is it?"

"A matter of two hundred pounds," said Stephen.

"How long has it taken you to earn – to get it?"

"Fourteen years."

"And have you been saving it up for me?"

"Ay."

"To take me to Iceland?"

"Ay."

"How much more have you?"

"Not a great deal."

"But how much?"

"I don't know – scarcely."

"Have you any more?"

Stephen made no answer.

"Have you any more, father?"

"No."

Michael Sunlocks felt his face flush deep in the darkness.

"Father," he said, and his voice broke, "we are parting, you and I, and we may not meet again soon; indeed, we may never meet again. I have made you a solemn promise. Will you not make me one?"

"What is it, sir?"

"That you will never, never try to get more by the same means."

"There'll be no occasion now."

"But will you promise me?"

"Ay."

"Then give me the money."

Stephen handed the bag to Michael.

"It's fourteen years of your life, is it not?"

"So to say."

"And now it's mine, isn't it, to do as I like with it?"

"No, sir, but to do as you ought with it."

"Then I ought to give it back to you. Come, take it. But wait! Remember your promise, father. Don't forget – I've bought every hour of your life that's left."

Father and son parted at the ship's side in silence, with throats too full for speech. Many small boats, pulled by men and boys, were lying about the ladder, and there was a good deal of shouting and swearing and noisy laughter there. Some of the boatmen recognized Michael Sunlocks and bellowed their farewells to him. "*Dy banne Jee oo?*"

"God bless you! God bless you!" they said, and then among themselves they seemed to discuss the reason of his going. "Well, what's it saying?" said one; "the crab that lies always in its hole is never fat."

The air had freshened, the swell of the sea had risen, and a sharp breeze was coming up from the east. Stephen Orry stepped to his mast, hoisted mainsail and mizzen, and stood out to sea. He had scarcely got clear away when he heard the brig weigh its anchor and beat down behind him. They were making towards the Point of Ayre, and when they came by the light Stephen Orry slackened off, and watched the ship go by him in the darkness.

He felt as if that were the last he was ever to see of his son in this world. And he loved him with all the strength of his great broken, bleeding heart. At that thought the outcast man laid his head in his hands, where he sat crouching at the tiller, and sobbed. There were none to hear him there; he was alone; and the low moan of the sea came up through the night from where his son was sailing away.

How long he sat there he did not know; he was thinking of his past, of his bad life in Iceland, and his long expiation in the Isle of Man. In the multitude of his sensations it seemed impossible to his dazed mind to know which of these two had been the worst, or the most foolish. Together they had left him a wreck. In the one he had thrown away the wife who loved him, in the other he had given up the son whom he loved. What was left to him? Nothing. He was a waif, despised and downtrodden. He thought of what might have happened to him if the chances of life had been different, and in that

first hour of his last bereavement all the softening influences of nineteen years, the uplooking and upworking, and the struggle towards atonement, were as much gone from him as if they had never been. Then he thought of the money, and told himself that it was not now that he lost his son for the first time; he had lost him fourteen years ago, when he parted with him to the Governor. Since then their relations had been reversed. His little Sunlocks was his little Sunlocks no longer. He felt humiliated, he felt hardened, and by a strange impulse, whereof he understood but little, he cursed in his heart his sufferings more than his sins. They had been useless, they had been wasted, and he had been a fool not to live for himself. But in that moment, when the devil seemed to make havoc of good and evil together, God himself was not doing nothing.

Stephen Orry was drifting with the tide, when all at once he became conscious of the lapping of the water on stones near at hand, and of a bright light shed over the sea. Then he saw that he had drifted close to low ground off the Point of Ayre. He bore hard aport and beat out to sea again. Very soon the white water way was behind him; nothing was visible save the dark hull of the vessel going off towards the north, and nothing audible save the cry of a few gulls that were fishing by the light of the flare. It had been the work of three minutes only, but in that time one vivid impression had fixed itself on Stephen's preoccupied mind. The end of the old sandstone pier had been battered down by a recent storm; the box that once held the light had gone down with it, a pole had been thrust out at an angle from the overthrown stones, and from the end of this pole the light swung by a rope. No idea connected itself with this impression, which lay low down behind other thoughts.

The fog had lifted, but the night was still very dark. Not a star was shining and no moon appeared. Yet Stephen's eye – the eye of a sailor accustomed to the darkness of the sea at night – could descry something that lay to the north. The Irish brig had disappeared. Yes, her sails were now gone. But out at sea – far out, half a league away – what black thing was there? Oh, it must be a cloud, that was all; and no doubt a storm was brewing. Yet no, it was looming larger and larger, and coming nearer and nearer. It was a sail. Stephen could see it plainly enough now against the leaden sky. It was a schooner; he could make out its two masts, with fore and aft sails. It was an Irish schooner; he could recognize its heavy hull and hollowed cutwater. It was tacking against wind and tide from the northeast; it was a Dublin schooner and was homeward bound from Iceland, having called at Whitehaven and now putting in at Ramsey.

Stephen Orry had been in the act of putting about when this object caught his eye, but now a strange thing occurred. All at once his late troubles lay back in his mind, and by a sort of unconscious mechanical habit of intellect he began to put familiar ideas together. This schooner that was coming from Iceland would be heavy laden; it would have whalebone, and eider down, and tallow. If it ran ashore and was wrecked some of this cargo might be taken by some one and sold for something to a French smuggler that lay outside the Chicken Rocks. That flare on the Point of Ayre was the only sea-light on this north coast of the island, and it hung by a rope from a pole. The land lay low about it, there was not a house on that sandy headland for miles on miles, and the night was very dark. All this came up to Stephen Orry's mind by no effort of will; he looked out of his dull eyes on the dull stretch of sea and sky, and the thoughts were there of themselves.

What power outside himself was at work with him? Did anything tell him that this was the great moment of his life – that his destiny hung on it – that the ordeal he had just gone through was as nothing to the ordeal that was yet before him? As he sat in his boat, peering into the darkness at the black shadow on the horizon, did any voice whisper in his ear: – "Stephen Orry, on the ship that is yonder there is one who hates you and has sworn to slay you? He is coming, he is coming, and he is flesh of your flesh? He is your own son, and Rachel's!"

Stephen Orry fetched his boat away to leeward, and in two minutes more he had run down the light on the Point of Ayre. The light fell into the water, and then all was dark. Stephen Orry steered on over the freshening sea, and then slackened off to wait and watch. All this time he had been sitting at the tiller, never having risen from it since he stepped his mast by the side of the brig. Now he got

on his feet to shorten sail, for the wind was rising and he meant to drift by the mizzen. As he rose something fell with a clank to the boat's bottom from his lap or his pocket. It was the bag of money, which Michael Sunlocks had returned to him.

Stephen Orry stooped down to pick it up; and having it in his hand he dropped back like a man who has been dealt a blow. Then, indeed, a voice rang in his ears; he could hear it over the wind that was rising, the splash of the white breakers on the beach, and the low boom of the deep sea outside. "Remember your promise, father. I have bought every hour of your life that's left."

His heart seemed to stand still. He looked around in the dull agony of a fear that was new to him, turning his eyes first to the headland that showed faintly against the heavy sky, then to the pier where no light now shone, and then to the black cloud of sail that grew larger every instant. One minute passed – two – three. Meantime the black cloud of sail was drawing closer. There were living men aboard of that ship, and they were running on to their death. Yes, they were men, living men – men with wives who loved them, and children who climbed to their knees. But perhaps they had seen the light when it went down. Merciful heaven, let it be so – let it be so!

The soul of Stephen Orry was awake at length. Another minute he waited, another and another, and the black shadow came yet nearer. At her next tack the ship would run on the land, and already Stephen seemed to hear the grating of her keel over the rocks below the beach. He could bear the suspense no longer, and hoisted sail to bear down on the schooner and warn her. But the wind was strong by this time, driving hard off the sea and the tide ran faster than before.

Stephen Orry was now some thirty fathoms space to the north of the broken pier, and at that point the current from across Maughold Head meets the current going across the Mull of Galloway. Laboring in the heavy sea he could barely fetch about, but when at last he got head out to sea he began to drive down on the schooner at a furious speed. He tried to run close along by her on the weather side, but before he came within a hundred fathoms he saw that he was in the full race of the north current, and strong seaman though he was, he could not get near. Then he shouted, but the wind carried away his voice. He shouted again, but the schooner gave no sign. In the darkness the dark vessel scudded past him.

He was now like a man possessed. Fetching about he ran in before the wind, thinking to pass the schooner on her tack. He passed her indeed: he was shot far beyond her, shouting as he went, but again his voice was drowned in the roar of the sea. He was almost atop of the breakers now, yet he fetched about once more, and shouted again and again and again. But the ship came on and on, and no one heard the wild voice, that rang out between the dark sea and sky like the cry of a strong swimmer in his last agony.

CHAPTER IX.

The Coming of Jason

The schooner was the Peveril, homeward bound from Reykjavik to Dublin, with a hundred tons of tallow, fifty bales of eider down, and fifty casks of cods' and sharks' oil. Leaving the Icelandic capital on the morning after Easter Day, with a fair wind, for the outer Hebrides, she had run through the North Channel by the middle of the week, and put into Whitehaven on the Friday. Next day she had stood out over the Irish Sea for the Isle of Man, intending to lie off at Ramsey for contraband rum. Her skipper and mate were both Englishmen, and her crew were all Irish, except two, a Manxman and an Icelander.

The Manxman was a grizzled old sea dog, who had followed the Manx fisheries twenty years and smuggling twenty other years, and then turned seaman before the mast. His name was Davy Kerruish, and when folks asked if the Methodists had got hold of him that he had turned honest in his old age, he closed one rheumy yellow eye very knowingly, tipped one black thumb over his shoulder to where the Government cutters lay anchored outside, and said in a touching voice, "Aw, well, boy, I'm thinking Castle Rushen isn't no place for a poor man when he's gettin' anyways ould."

The Icelander was a brawny young fellow of about twenty, of great height and big muscles, and with long red hair. He had shipped at Reykjavik, in the room of an Irishman, who had died on the outward trip and been buried at sea off the Engy Island. He was not a favorite among the crew; he spoke English well, but was no good at a yarn in the forecabin; he was silent, gloomy, not too fond of work, and often the butt of his mates in many a lumbering jest that he did not seem to see. He had signed on the wharf on the morning the schooner sailed, and the only kit he had brought aboard was a rush cage with a canary. He hung the bird in the darkness above his bunk, and it was all but his sole companion. Now and again he spoke to old Kerruish, but hardly ever to the other men.

"Och, sollum and quiet lek," old Davy would say at the galley fire, "but none so simple at all. Aw no, no, no; and wonderful cur'ous about my own bit of an island yander."

The Icelander was Jason, son of Rachel and Stephen Orry.

There is not a more treacherous channel around the British Isles than that which lies between St. Bee's Head, the Mull of Galloway, and the Point of Ayre, for four strong currents meet and fight in that neck of the Irish Sea. With a stiff breeze on the port quarter, the Peveril had been driven due west from Whitehaven on the heavy current from the Solway Frith, until she had met the current from the North Channel and then she had tacked down towards the Isle of Man. It was dark by that time, and the skipper had leaned over the starboard gangway until he had sighted the light on the Point of Ayre. Even then he had been puzzled, for the light was feebler than he remembered it.

"Can you make it out, Davy?" he had said to old Kerruish.

"Aw, yes, though, and plain as plain," said Davy; and then the skipper had gone below.

The Manxman had been at the helm, and Jason, who was on the same watch, had sidled up to him at intervals and held a conversation with him in snatches, of which this is the sum and substance.

"Is it the Isle of Man on the starboard bow, Davy?"

"I darn' say no, boy."

"Lived there long, Davy?"

"Aw, thirty years afore you were born, maybe."

"Ever known any of my countrymen on the island?"

"Just one, boy; just one."

"What was he?"

"A big chap, six feet six, if an inch, and ter'ble strong; and a fist at him like a sledge; and a rough enough divil, too, and ye darn' spit afore him; but quiet for all – aw, yes, wonderful quiet."

"Who was he, Davy?"

"A widda man these teens of years."

"But what was his name?"

"Paul? – no! Peter? – no! Chut, bless ye, it's clane gone at me; but it's one of the lot in the ould Book, any way."

"Was it Stephen?"

"By gough, yes, and a middlin' good guess too."

"Stephen what?"

"Stephen – shoo! it's gone at me again! What's that they're callin' the ould King that's going buryin' down Laxey way?"

"Orry?"

"Stephen Orry it is, for sure. Then it's like you knew him, boy?"

"No – that is – no, no."

"No relations?"

"No. But is he still alive?"

"Aw, yes, though. It's unknownced to me that he's dead, anyway."

"Where is he living now?"

"Down Port Erin way, by the Sound, some place."

"Davy, do we put into the harbor at Ramsey?"

"Aw, divil a chance of that, boy, with sperrits comin' over the side quiet-like in the night, you know, eighteen-pence a gallon, and as much as you can drink for nothin'."

"How far do we lie outside?"

"Maybe a biscuit throw or two. We never useder lie farther, boy."

"That's nothing, Davy."

After that the watch had been changed, and then a strange thing had happened. The day had been heavy and cold, with a sky that hung low over the sea, and a mist that reduced the visible globe to a circle of fifty fathoms wide. As the night had closed in the mist had lifted, and the wind had risen and some sheets of water had come combing over the weather quarter. The men had been turned up to stow the yards and bring the schooner to the wind, and when they had gone below they had been wet and miserable, chewing doggedly at the tobacco in their cheeks, and growling at the darkness of the forecandle, for the slush-lamp had not yet been lighted. And just then, above the muttered curses, the tramping of heavy boots and the swish of oilskins that were being shaken to drain them, there arose the sweet song of a bird. It was Jason's canary, singing in the dark corner of his bunk a foot above his head, for on coming below the lad had thrown himself down in his wet clothes. The growling came to an end, the shuffling of feet stopped, and the men paused a moment to listen, and then burst into peals of laughter. But the bird gave no heed either to their silence or their noise, but sang on with a full throat. And the men listened, and then laughed again, and then suddenly ceased to laugh. A match was struck and the slush-lamp began to gleam out over mahogany faces that looked at each other with eyes of awe. The men shook out their coats and hung them over the stanchions. Still the bird sang on. It was uncanny, this strange singing in the darkness. The men charged their cuddies, fired up, and crouched together as they smoked. Still the bird sang on.

"Och, it's the divil in the craythur," said one; "you go bail there's a storm brewin'. It's just ould Harry hisself rej'icing."

"Then, by St. Patrick, I'll screw the neck of him," said another.

"Aisy, man, aisy," said old Davy; "it's the lad's."

"The lad be – " said the other, and up he jumped. Jason saw the man coming towards his bunk, and laid hold of the wrist of the arm that he stretched over it.

"Stop that," said Jason; but the lad was on his back, and in an instant the man had thrown his body on top of him, leaned over him and wrenched open the door of the cage. The song stopped; there was a short rustle of wings, a slight chirp-chirp, and then a moment's silence, followed by the

man's light laugh as he drew back with the little yellow bird dangling by the neck from his black thumb and forefinger.

But before the great hulking fellow had twisted about to where his mates sat and smoked under the lamp, Jason had leapt from his bunk, stuck his fist into the ruffian's throat and pinned him against a beam.

" – you," he cried, thrusting his face into the man's face, "shall I kill you after it?"

"Help! My God, help!" the man gurgled out, with Jason's knuckles ground hard into his windpipe.

The others were in no hurry to interfere, but they shambled up at length, and amid shouts and growls of "Let go," "Let go the hoults," and "God's sake, slack the grip," the two were parted. Then the man who had killed the bird went off, puffing and cursing between his chattering teeth, and his mates began to laugh at the big words that came from his weak stomach, while old Davy Kerruish went over to Jason to comfort him.

"Sarve him right, the craythur," said Davy. "He's half dead, but that's just half too much life in him yet, though. It's what I've tould them times on times. 'Lave him alone,' says I; 'the lad's quiet, but he'll be coorse enough if he's bothered. And my gough, boy, what a face at ye yander, when you were twissin' the handkercher at him! Aw, thinks I, he's the spittin picsher of the big widda man Orry – Stephen Orry – brimstone and vinegar, and gunpowder atop of a slow fire."

And it was just at that moment, as old Davy was laughing through his yellow eyes and broken teeth at young Jason, and the other men were laughing at Jason's adversary, and the dim forecandle under its spluttering slush-lamp echoed and rang with the uproar, that a wild voice came down from the deck – "Below there! All hands up! Breakers ahead!"

Now the moment when the watch had been changed had been the very moment when Stephen Orry had run down the lamp, so that neither by the Manxman who gave up the helm nor by the Irishman who took it had the light been missed when it fell into the sea. And the moment when Stephen Orry shouted to the schooner to warn it had been the moment when the muffled peals of laughter at the bird's strange song had come up from the watch below in the forecandle. The wind had whistled among the sheets, and the flying spray had smitten the men's faces, but though the mist had lifted, the sky had still hung low and dark, showing neither moon nor stars, nor any hint of the land that lay ahead. But straight for the land the vessel had been driving in the darkness, under the power of wind and tide. After a time the helmsman had sighted a solitary light close in on the lee bow. "Point of Ayre," he thought, and luffed off a little, intending to beat down the middle of the bay. It had been the light on the jetty at Ramsey; and the little town behind it, with its back to the sea, lay dark and asleep, for the night was then well worn towards midnight. After that the helmsman had sighted two stronger lights beyond. "Ramsey," he thought, and put his helm aport. But suddenly the man on the lookout had shouted, "Breakers ahead," and the cry had been sent down the forecandle.

In an instant all hands were on deck, amid the distraction and uproar, the shouting and blind groping of the cruel darkness. Against the dark sky the yet darker land could now be plainly seen, and a strong tide was driving the vessel on to it. The helm was put hard to starboard, and the schooner's head began to pay off towards the wind. Then all at once it was seen that right under the vessel's bow some black thing lay just above the level of the sea, with a fringe of white foam around it.

"Davy, what do you make of it?" shouted the skipper.

"Lord-a-massy, it's the Carick," screamed Davy.

"Let go the anchor," roared the skipper.

But it was too late even for that last refuge. At the next moment the schooner struck heavily; she was on the reef in Ramsey Bay, and pitching miserably with every heave of the sea.

The two bright lights that led the vessel to her ruin came from the two little bays that lie under Maughold Head. The light in Port-y-Vullin was in the hut of Stephen Orry, who had lit his lamp and placed it in the window when he went out to bid farewell to Michael Sunlocks, thinking no evil

thereby to any man but only that it would guide him home again when he should return in the boat. The light in Port Lague was from the cottage of three old net weavers, who had lived there without woman or girl, or chick or child, through more than forty years. Two or three were brothers, Danny and Jemmy Kewley, both over seventy years old, and their housemate, who was ninety, and had been a companion of their father, was known as Juan McLady. Danny and Jemmy still worked at the looms year in and year out, every working hour of the day and night, and Juan, long past other labor, cooked and sewed and cleaned for them. All three had grown dim of sight, and now groped about like three old earthworms. Every year for five years past they had needed an extra candle to work by, so that eight tallow dips, made in their own iron mould, swung from the open roof rafters over the meshes on that night when the Peveril struck on the Carick.

It was supper-time, though old Danny and old Jemmy were still at the looms. Old Juan had washed out a bowl of potatoes, filled the pot with them, hung them on the chimney hook and stirred the peats. Then to make them boil the quicker he had gone out with the tongs to the side of the house for some dry gorse from the gorse heap. While there he had peered through the darkness of the bay for the light on the Point of Ayre, and had missed it, and on going back he had said:

"It's out again. That's the third time inside a month. I'll go bail something will happen yet."

He had got no answer, and so sat down on the three-legged stool to feed the fire with gorse lifted on the tongs. When the potatoes had boiled he had carried them to the door to drain them, and then, with the click-clack of the levers behind him, he had thought he heard, over the deep boom and splash of the sea in front, a voice like a cry. Going indoors he had said, "Plague on the water-bailiff and commissioners and kays and councils. I'll go bail there's smuggling going on under their very noses. I'd have the law on the lot of them, so I would."

Old Danny and old Jemmy knew the temper of their housemate – that he was never happy save when he had somebody to higgie with – so they paid no heed to his mutterings. But when Juan, having set the potatoes to steam with a rag spread over them, went out for the salt herrings, to where they hung to dry on a stick against the sunny side of the porch, he was sure that above the click of the levers, the boom and splash of the sea and the whistle of the wind, he could hear a clamorous shout of many voices, like a wild cry of distress. Then he hobbled back with a wizzened face of deadly pallor and told what he had heard, and the shuttles were stopped, and there was silence in the little house.

"It went by me same as the wind," said old Juan.

"Maybe it was the nightman," said old Danny.

At that old Jemmy nodded his head very gravely, and old Juan held on to the lever handles; and through those precious minutes when the crew of the schooner were fighting in the grip of death in the darkness, these three old men, their nearest fellow creatures, half dead, half blind, were held in the grip of superstitious fears.

"There again," cried old Juan; and through the door that he had left open the cry came in above roar of wind and sea.

"It's men that's yander," said old Jemmy.

"Ay," said old Danny.

"Maybe it's a ship on the Carick," said old Juan.

"Let's away and look," said old Jemmy.

And then the three helpless old men, trembling and affrighted, straining their dim eyes to see and their deaf ears to hear, and clinging to each other's hands like little children, groped their slow way to the beach. Down there the cries were louder than they had been on the brows above.

"Mercy me, let's away to Lague for the boys," said old Juan; and leaving behind them the voices that cried for help, the old men trudged and stumbled through the dark lanes.

Lague was asleep, but the old men knocked, and the windows were opened and night-capped heads thrust through. Very soon the house and courtyard echoed with many footsteps, and the bell over the porch rang out through the night, to call up the neighbors far and near.

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