

BARR AMELIA

E.

A DAUGHTER OF FIFE

Amelia Barr
A Daughter of Fife

«Public Domain»

Barr A.

A Daughter of Fife / A. Barr — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	10
CHAPTER III	16
CHAPTER IV	20
CHAPTER V	25
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	29

Amelia E. Barr

A Daughter of Fife

CHAPTER I

THE BEACHING OF THE BOAT

"Thou old gray sea,
Thou broad briny water,
With thy ripple and thy splash,
And thy waves as they lash
The old gray rocks on the shore.
With thy tempests as they roar,
And thy crested billows hoar,
And thy tide evermore
Fresh and free."

—*Dr. Blackie.*

On the shore of a little land-locked haven, into which the gulls and terns bring tidings of the sea, stands the fishing hamlet of Pittenloch. It is in the "East Neuk o' Fife," that bit of old Scotland "fronted with a girdle of little towns," of which Pittenloch is one of the smallest and the most characteristic. Some of the cottages stand upon the sands, others are grouped in a steep glen, and a few surmount the lofty sea-washed rocks.

To their inhabitants the sea is every thing. Their hopes and fears, their gains and losses, their joys and sorrows, are linked with it; and the largeness of the ocean has moulded their feelings and their characters. They are in a measure partakers of its immensity and its mystery. The commonest of their men have wrestled with the powers of the air, and the might of wind, and wave, and icy cold. The weakest of their women have felt the hallowing touch of sudden calamity, and of long, lonely, life-and-death, watches. They are intensely religious, they hold tenaciously to the modes of thought and speech, to the manner of living and dressing, and to all the household traditions which they have cherished for centuries.

Two voices only have had the power to move them from the even spirit of their life—the voice of Knox, and the voice of Chalmers. It was among the fishers of Fife that Knox began his crusade against popery; and from their very midst, in later days, sprang the champion of the Free Kirk. Otherwise rebellions and revolutions troubled them little. Whether Scotland's king sat in Edinburgh or London—whether Prince Charles or George of Hanover reigned, was to them of small importance. They lived apart from the battle of life, and only the things relating to their eternal salvation, or their daily bread, moved them.

Forty-two years ago there was no landward road to Pittenloch, unless you followed the goats down the steep rocks. There was not a horse or cart in the place; probably there was not a man in it who had ever seen a haymaking. If you went to Pittenloch, you went by the sea; if you left it, there was the same grand highway. And the great, bearded, sinewy men, bending to the oars, and sending the boat spinning through clouds of spindrift, made it, after all, a right royal road.

Forty-two years ago, one wild March afternoon, a young woman was standing on the beach of Pittenloch. There was an ominous wail in the sea, telling of the fierce tide yet to come; and all around her whirling wraiths of vapor sweeping across the level sands. From a little distance, she

appeared like a woman standing amid gray clouds—a sombre, solid, figure; whose attitude was one of grave thoughtfulness. Approaching nearer, it was evident that her gaze was fixed upon a fishing boat which had been drawn high upon the shingle; and from which a party of heavy-footed fishermen were slowly retreating.

She was a beautiful woman; tall, supple, erect; with a positive splendor of health and color. Her dress was that of the Fife fisher-girl; a blue flannel jacket, a very short white and yellow petticoat, and a white cap drawn over her hair, and tied down with a lilac kerchief knotted under the chin. This kerchief outlined the superb oval of her face; and made more remarkable the large gray eyes, the red curved mouth, and the wide white brow. She was barefooted, and she tapped one foot restlessly upon the wet sands, to relieve, by physical motion, her mental tension and sorrow.

It was Maggie Promoter, and the boat which had just been so solemnly "beached" had been her father's. It was a good boat, strong in every timber, an old world Buckie skiff, notorious for fending in foundering seas; but it had failed Promoter in the last storm, and three days after he and his sons had gone to the bottom had been found floating in Largo Bay.

If it had been a conscious criminal, a boat which had wilfully and carelessly sacrificed life, it could hardly have been touched with more dislike; and in accordance with the ancient law of the Buchan and Fife fishers, it was "*put from the sea.*" Never again might it toss on the salt free waves, and be trusted with fishermen's lives. Silently it was drawn high up on the desolate shingle, and left to its long and shameful decay.

Maggie had watched the ceremony from a little distance; but when the fishers had disappeared in the gathering mist, she slowly approached the boat. There it lay, upside down, black and lonely, far beyond the highest mark of any pitying tide. She fancied that the insensate timber had a look of shame and suffering, and she spoke to it, as if it had a soul to comprehend her:—

"Lizzie! Lizzie! What cam' o'er you no to bide right side up? Four gude men to your keeping, Lizzie, and you lost them a'. Think shame o' yersel', think shame o' yersel', for the sorrow you hae brought! You'll be a heart grief to me as long as you lie there; for I named you mysel', little thinking o' what would come o' it."

For a few minutes she stood looking at the condemned and unfortunate boat in silence; then she turned and began to walk rapidly toward the nearest cluster of cottages. The sea fog was rolling in thick, with the tide, and the air was cold and keen. A voice called her through it, and she answered the long-drawn "Maggie" with three cheerful words, "I'm coming, Davie." Very soon Davie loomed through the fog, and throwing a plaid about her, said, "What for did you go near the boat, Maggie? When you ken where ill luck is, you should keep far from it."

"A better looking or a bonnier boat I ne'er saw, Davie."

"It's wi' boats, as it is wi' men and women; some for destruction, some for salvation. The Powers above hae the ordering o' it, and it's a' right, Maggie."

"That's what folks say. I'm dooting it mysel'. It's our ain fault some way. Noo there would be a false plumb in yonder boat, though we didna ken it."

"Weel, weel, she failed in what was expected o' her, and she's got her deserts. We must tak' care o' our ain job. But I hae news for you, and if you'll mak' a cup o' tea, and toast a Finnin haddie, we'll talk it o'er."

The Promoter cottage was in a bend of the hills, but so near the sea that the full tide broke almost at its door, and then drew the tinkling pebbles down the beach after it. It was a low stone dwelling, white-washed, and heather-roofed, and containing only three rooms. David and Maggie entered the principal one together. Its deal furniture was spotless, its floor cleanly sanded, and a bright turf fire was burning on the brick hearth. Some oars and creels were hung against the wall, and on a pile of nets in the warmest corner, a little laddie belonging to a neighbor's household was fast asleep.

Maggie quickly threw on more turf, and drew the crane above the fire, and hung the kettle upon it. Then with a light and active step she set about toasting the oat cake and the haddie, and making

the tea, and setting the little round table. But her heart was heavy enough. Scarcely a week before her father and three eldest brothers had gone out to the fishing, and perished in a sudden storm; and the house place, so lately busy and noisy with the stir of nearly half-a-dozen menfolk, was now strangely still and lonely.

Maggie was a year older than her brother David, but she never thought of assuming any authority over him. In the first place, he had the privilege of sex; in the next, David Promoter was generally allowed to be "extr'onar' wise-like and unwardly in a' his ways." In fact there had been an intention of breaking through the family traditions and sending him to the University of Aberdeen. Latterly old Promoter had smoked his pipe very often to the ambitious hope of a minister in his family. David's brothers and sister had also learned to look upon the lad as destined by Providence to bring holy honors upon the household. No thought of jealousy had marred their intended self-denial in their younger brother's behalf. Their stern Calvinism taught them that Jacob's and Jesse's families were not likely to be the only ones in which the younger sons should be chosen for vessels of honor; and Will Promoter, the eldest of the brothers, spoke for all, when he said, "Send Davie to Aberdeen, fayther; gladly we will a' of us help wi' the fees; and may be we shall live to see a great minister come oot o' the fishing boats."

But though the intended sacrifice had been a sincerely pure and unselfish one, it had nevertheless been refused. Why it had been refused, was the question filling David's heart with doubt and despair, as he sat with his head in his hands, gazing into the fire that March afternoon. Maggie was watching him, though he did not perceive it, and by an almost unconscious mental act was comparing him with his dead brothers. They had been simply strong fair fishers, with that open air look men get who continually set their faces to the winds and waves. David was different altogether. He was exceedingly tall, and until years filled in his huge framework of bone and muscle, would very likely be called "gawky." But he had the face of a mediaeval ecclesiastic; spare, and sallow, and pointed at the chin. His hair, black and exceeding fine, hung naturally in long, straggling masses; his mouth was straight and perhaps a little cruel; his black, deep set eyes had the glow in them of a passionate and mystical soul. Such a man, if he had not been reared in the straitest sect of Calvinism, would have adopted it—for it was his soul's native air.

That he should go to the university and become a minister seemed to David as proper as that an apple tree should bear an apple. As soon as it was suggested, he felt himself in the moderator's chair of the general assembly. "Why had such generous and holy hopes been destroyed?" Maggie knew the drift of his thoughts, and she hastened her preparations for tea; for though it is a humiliating thing to admit, the most sacred of our griefs are not independent of mere physical comforts. David's and Maggie's sorrow was a deep and poignant one, but the refreshing tea and cake and fish were at least the vehicle of consolation. As they ate they talked to one another, and David's brooding despair was for the hour dissipated.

During the days of alternating hope and disappointment following the storm in which the Promoters perished, they had not permitted themselves to think, much less to speak of a future which did not include those who might yet return. But hope was over. When Promoter's mates beached his boat, both David and Maggie understood the rite to be a funeral one. It was not customary for women to go to funerals, but Maggie, standing afar off, amid the gray thick fog, had watched the men drag the unfortunate craft "where a boat ought never to be;" and when they had gone away, had stood by the lonely degraded thing, and felt as sad and hopeless, as if it had been the stone at a grave's mouth.

All the past was past; they had to begin a life set to new methods and motives: "and the sooner the better," thought Maggie, "if fayther were here, he wad say that."

"Davie?"

"Weel?"

"Is the tea gude? And the fish, and the cake?"

"Ay, they're gude. I didna think I was sae hungry. I'm maist 'shamed to enjoy them sae hearty."

"Life's wark wants life's food; and we canna sit wi' idle hands anither seven days. You were saying you had news, what will it be?"

"Ay, I had forgotten. Willie Johnson's Willie has brought back wi' him a young man. He wants a quiet room to himsel', and there's naebody in Pittenloch can gie him ane, if it be na us, or the Widow Thompson. He's offered a crown a week for ane."

"You should hae said instanter we'd be thankfu'. My certie! A crown a week, that's a fair godsend, Davie."

"The widow has the first right to the godsend; if she canna tak' it, she'll send it our way, Maggie."

"Davie, there is £50 in Largo Bank."

"I ken that."

"You'll tak' it. It will gie you a' the start you need at Aberdeen. Fayther said £30 a year wad do, wi' a carefu' hand to guide it. You'll be Helping yoursel' wi' a bit teaching afore it is a' gane."

"I'll no touch it. What are you talking about? Oor fayther saved it for his auld age and his burying."

"And he'll ne'er be auld now, Davie! and God has found him a grave that only He kens o'! I can spin, and weave, and sew, and the lasses roun' about have keepit my needle aye busy. Why not? I served my time in Largo, and I can cut a skirt or josey, and mak' a kirk gown, better than any one nearer."

"You'll be wanting to marry ere lang, Maggie. Angus Raith thinks much o' you; and £50 wad buy his share in Cupar's boat. I sall hae the cottage, and the £50 is to be for your wedding and plenishing."

"This is na a time to talk o' wedding, Davie; and there is na any promise made to Angus Raith! Go into Kinkell the morn and speak wi' the minister; he is a wise man, and we will baith o' us do the thing he says."

After this, the conversation drifted hither and thither, until the meal Was finished. Then while Maggie tidied up the room, David opened the door And stood thoughtfully within its shadow. "There's a voice in the sea to-night," he said mournfully, "and when the tide turns back, the wind will have its way."

"Can you see aught?"

"Naething. There's a heavy mist and a thick smur—but I hear steps on the shingle. I'm thinking it will be Johnson wi' the stranger I spoke o'."

"Ay, weel, I hae gotten my feet dressed," and she looked down with approval at her ribbed gray stockings, and low shoes, the brass clasps of which she had just latched.

David did not answer her, for he was bidding his visitors welcome. Then Maggie turned round with the freshly lit "cruisie" in her hand, and her eyes were caught by two other eyes, and held as if by a spell. She was conscious, as she stood blushing, that the stranger had been astonished at her appearance, but she certainly did not dream that it was her great beauty which had for one moment made him incapable of controlling his sense of it. It was only one moment, in the next he turned to David, and offered to pay him two shillings a day for the use of his vacant room, and a share of his simple fare.

The interview lasted but a very short time. Maggie said, she could have the room ready for him by noon of the following day, and as soon as the matter was settled, he went.

He had not sat down, and so every one else had remained standing; but at the open door he caught Maggie's eyes once more, and with a slight movement of adieu to her, he disappeared. She trembled, and turned hot and cold, and felt as if she must cry. It was with difficulty she hid her emotion from her brother, who looked queerly at her as he said, "I ne'er saw any man look like that man."

"He had a bonnie braidcloth cloak on."

"Sae handsome and sae stately; and if kings hae any grander way, there's nae wonder folks bow down to them. I aye thocht that Dr. Balmuto had the maist compelling look wi' him; but I think yonder man wouldna fear him, e'en though the doctor had on his Geneva bands and his silk gown."

"What's his name, Davie?"

"I dinna ken. I never thocht to ask him."

Then a singular sadness, one quite distinct from the shadow of their known sorrow, settled upon both brother and sister. Was it a sorrow of apprehension? one of those divinations which we call presentiments. Neither David nor Maggie questioned it; they were not given to analyzing Their feelings, indeed they were totally unacquainted with this most useless of mental processes.

But nevertheless, the stranger had left an influence, and for half an hour they sat silently musing. Maggie was the first to break its spell. In a low voice, as she bent lower to the dying fire, she began to talk of the dead for whom "God had found graves;" and to recall little incidents of their hard unselfish lives, which particularly touched David's and her own experience.

"If they were here to-night, Davie—oot on the dark sea—tossed up and down—pulling in the nets or lines wi' freezing hands—hungry, anxious, fearfu' o' death—wad we wish it?"

"Na, na, na, Maggie! Where they are noo, the light doesna fade, and the heart doesna fail, and the full cup never breaks. Come, let us ask o' the Book thegither. I dinna doot, but we sall get just the word we are needing."

Maggie rose and took it from its place on the broad shelf by the window, and laid it down upon the table. David lifted the light and stood beside her. Then with a reverent upward glance, he opened the well-used leaves:—

"Maggie, what need we mair? Listen to the word o' the Lord;" and with a voice tender and triumphant he read aloud—

"Then are they glad because they be quiet: so He bringeth them unto their desired haven."

CHAPTER II

THE UNKNOWN GUEST

"She was a form of life and light,
That seen, became a part of sight,
And rose where'er I turned mine eye,
The Morning Star of Memory."
"Thou art more than all the shrines that hold thee."

The next morning was a very stormy one; there was an iron-gray sky above a black tumbling sea; and the rain, driven by a mad wind, smote the face like a blow from a passionate hand. The boats were all at anchor, with no prospect of a fishing that day; and the fishermen, gathered in little groups, were muttering over the bad weather. But their talk was not bitter, like the complaints which landsmen make over leveled crops. Regarding every thing that happened as the result of righteous decree, why should they rail at disappointment or misfortune? Some went slowly to a shed where boats were being built; others sat down within the doors of their cottages and began to knit their nets, or to mend such as were out of order.

David could take a landward route to Kinkell, among the shore rocks; for though the path was often a mere footing, it was well known to him; and as for the stormy weather, it seemed only a part of the darker and fiercer tempest in his own soul. He left Maggie early. She watched him climbing with bent head the misty heights, until a projecting rock hid him from view; then she went back to her household duties.

The first one was to prepare the room she had rented for its strange guest and it gave her many a pang to fold away the "kirk clothes" of her father and brothers and lock them from sight in the big "kist" that was the family wardrobe. For clothing has a woeful individuality, when we put it away forever; and the shoes of the dead men had a personality that almost terrified her. How pitiful, how forsaken, how almost sentient they looked! Blind with tears, she hid them from sight, and then turned, as the Bereaved must ever turn, back to the toil and need of daily life.

There was but one window in the room, a little one opening on hinges, and glazed with small diamond-shaped bits of glass. The driving storm had washed it clean, she hung a white curtain before it, and brought from the living room a pot of scarlet geranium, and a great sea shell, from whose mouth hung a luxuriant musk plant. Its cool fragrance filled the room, and gave an almost dainty feeling to the spotlessness of the deal furniture and the homespun linen. Before the turf fire there was a square of rag carpet, and the bits of blue and scarlet in it were pretty contrasts to the white wood of the chairs and table.

The stranger was to have come about noon, but it was the middle of the afternoon when he arrived. The storm was then nearly over, and there was a glint of watery sunshine athwart the cold; green, tossing sea. Maggie had grown anxious at his delay, and then a little cross. At two o'clock she gave a final peep into the room and said to herself,—"I'll just get on wi' my wark, let him come, or let him bide awa'. I canna waste my time waiting for folk that dinna ken the worth o' time."

So when her lodger stood at her door she was at her baking board, and patting the cakes so hard, that she did not hear him, until he said, "Good afternoon, Miss Promoter."

Then she turned sharply around, and answered, "Maggie Promoter, if it please you, sir."

"Very well," he said gravely, "good afternoon, Maggie. Is your brother at home?"

"No, sir; he's awa' to Kinkell. Your room is ready for you, sir." As she spoke she was rubbing the meal from her hands, and he stood watching her with delight. He had wondered if her beauty would

bear the test of daylight, or if it needed the broad shadows, and the dull glow of the burning turf and the oil cruise. But she stood directly in the band of sunshine, and was only the more brilliantly fair for it. He was not in love with her, he was sure of that, but he was interested by a life so vivid, so full of splendid color, grace, and vitality.

With a little pride she opened the door of his room, and stirred up the glowing peats, and put the big rush chair before them,—“And you can just call me, sir, when you want aught,” she said, “I’ll go ben noo, and finish my cake baking.”

“Maggie, this room is exactly what I wanted; so clean and quiet! I’m much obliged to you for allowing me to use it.” “You pay siller, sir, and there’s nae call to say thank you!” With the words she closed the door, and was gone. And somehow, the tone of reserve and the positive click of the latch made him feel that there would be limits he could not pass.

In a couple of hours he heard the little stir of David’s return, and the preparation for tea. Maggie brought his table to the fireside and covered it with a square of linen, and set upon it his cup and plate. He had a book in his hand and he pretended to be absorbed in it; but he did not lose a movement that she made.

“Your tea is a’ ready, sir.”

He lifted his eyes then, and again her clear candid gaze was caught by his own. Both were this time distinctly conscious of the meeting, and both were for the moment embarrassed.

“It looks good, Maggie, and I am hungry. Is your brother back?”

“David is hame, sir. It was a hard walk he had. He’s tired, I’m thinking.”

The last words were said more to herself than to her lodger. She was somewhat troubled by Davie’s face and manner. He had scarcely spoken to her since his return, but had sat thinking with his head in his hands. She longed to know what Dr. Balmuto had said to him, but she knew David would resent questioning, and likely punish her curiosity by restraining confidence with her for a day or two. So she spoke only of the storm, and of the things which had come into her life or knowledge during his absence.

“Kirsty Wilson has got a sweetheart, David, and her no sixteen yet.”

“Kirsty aye thocht a lad was perfect salvation. You shallna be mair than civil to her. She has heard tell o’ the man staying wi’ us. It wad be that brought her here nae doot.”

“She was not here at a’. Maggie Johnson telled me. Maggie cam’ to borrow a cup o’ sugar. She said Cupar’s boat tried to win out o’ harbor after the storm. It could not manage though.”

“It was wrang to try it. Folks shouldna tempt Providence.”

“The cakes baked weel to-day.”

“Ay, they are gude eating.”

Then she could think of nothing more to say, and she washed the cups, and watched the dark, sad man bending over the fire. A vulgar woman, a selfish woman, would have interrupted that solemn session at her hearth. She would have turned Inquisitor, and tortured him with questions. “What’s the matter?” “Is there anything wrong?” “Are you sick?” etc., etc. But when Maggie saw that her brother was not inclined to talk to her, she left him alone to follow out the drift of his own thoughts. He seemed unconscious of her presence, and when her active house duties were over, she quietly pulled her big wheel forward, and began to spin.

The turfs burned red, the cruise burned low, the wheel “hummed” monotonously, and Maggie stepped lightly to-and-fro before it. In an hour the silence became oppressive, she was sleepy, she wished Davie would speak to her. She laid her fingers on the broad wooden band and was just going to move, when the inner door was opened, and the stranger stood at it. His pause was but a momentary one, but the room was all picture to him, especially the tall fair woman with her hand upon the big wheel, and her face, sensitive and questioning, turned toward her brother.

“David Promoter.”

"Ay, sir." He moved slowly like a man awakening from a sleep, but very quickly shook off the intense personality of his mood, and turned to the stranger with a shy and yet keen alertness.

"I dinna ken your name, sir, or I wad call you by it."

"My name is Allan Campbell."

"Sit down, sir. You are vera welcome. Can I do aught to pleasure you?"

"I want my trunk from Largo. Yesterday the sea was too heavy to bring it. Can you get it for me to-morrow?"

"An' the sea be willing, sir."

"There is a box of books also, but they are very heavy."

"Books! We'll try and bring them ony way."

"You love books then?"

"Better than bread."

"What have you read?"

"I have read my Bible, and The Institutes, and the Scot's Worthies, and pairt o' the Pilgrim's Progress. But I didna approve o' John Bunyan's doctrine. It's rank Armenianism."

"I have just finished a volume of Scott's poems. Have you read any of them?"

"Na, na; I hae nae skill o' poetry, sir, an' it be na the Psalms o' David."

"Let me read you a stanza, that I think you will enjoy."

He went for his book and drew a chair beside the little light, and read with a great deal of fire and feeling some passages from "The Lay of the Last Minstrel." He was soon sensible that he was gradually stirring in these two untutored souls, feelings of which they had hitherto been unconscious. He put more and more passion into the words, finally he threw down the book, and standing erect, recited them with outstretched arms and uplifted face. When he ceased, David was listening like one entranced; and Maggie's knitting had fallen to the floor: for she had unconsciously risen, and was gazing at the speaker with a face that reflected every change of his own. It was as if the strings of a harp had snapped, and left the souls of the listeners in mid-air. With an effort the enthusiasm was put aside, and after a minute's pause, David said, "I ne'er heard words like them words. Mony thanks to you, sir. I'm right glad it was a Scot wrote them," and he murmured softly—

"O Caledonia stern and wild!
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood."

Still it was Maggie's shy, tremulous glance and luminous face, that Thanked and pleased Campbell most, and he lifted the book and went away, almost as much under the spell of the poet, as the two simple souls who had heard his music for the first time. There was a moment or two in which life seemed strange to the brother and sister. They had much the same feeling as those who awaken from a glorious dream and find sordid cares and weary pains waiting for them. David rose and shook himself impatiently, then began to walk about the narrow room. Maggie lifted her stocking and made an effort to knit, but it was a useless one. In a few minutes she laid it down, and asked in a low voice, "Will you have a plate o' parritch, Davie?"

"Ay; I'm hungry, Maggie; and he'll maybe like one too."

So the pan was hung over the fire, and the plates and bowls set; and while Maggie scattered in the meal, and went for the milk, Davie tried to Collect his thoughts, and get from under the spell of the Magician of his age. And though poetry and porridge seem far enough apart Campbell said a hearty "thank you" to the offer of a plate full. He wanted the food, and it was also a delight to watch Maggie spread his cloth, and bring in the hot savory dish of meal, and the bowl of milk. For her soul was still in her beautiful face, her eyes limpid and bright as stars, and the simple meal so served

reminded him of the plain dignified feasts of the old rural deities. He told himself as he watched her, that he was living a fairer idyl than ever poet dreamed.

"Gude night, sir," she said softly, after she had served the food, "you took me into a new life the night, and thank you kindly, sir."

"It was a joy to me, Maggie. Good night."

She was a little afraid to speak to David; afraid of saying more than he would approve, and afraid of saying anything that would clash with the subject of his meditations. But she could not help noticing his restlessness and his silence; and she was wondering to herself, "why men-folk would be sae trying and contrary," when she heard him say—

"Grand words, and grand folk, Maggie; but there are far grander than thae be."

"Than kings, and queens, and braw knights and fair leddies?" "Ay, what are thae to angels and archangels, powers and dominions, purity, faith, hope, charity? Naething at a'."

"Maybe; but I wish I could see them, and I wish I could see the man who wrote anent them, and I wish you could write a book like it, Davie."

"Me! I have an ambition beyond the like o' that. To be His messenger and speak the words o' truth and salvation to the people! Oh Maggie, if I could win at that office, I wouldna envy king nor knight, no, nor the poet himsel'."

"Did you see the minister?"

"Ay; bring your chair near me, and I'll tell you what he said. You'll be to hear it, and as weel now, as again."

"Surely he had the kind word to-day, and you that fu' o' sorrow?"

"He meant to be kind. Surely he meant to be kind. He sent me word to come up to his study, and wee Mysie Balmuto took me there. Eh, Maggie, if I had a room like that! It was fu' o' books; books frae the floor to the roof-place. He was standing on the hearth wi' his back to the fire, and you ken hoo he looks at folk, through and through. 'Weel, Davie,' he said, 'what's brought you o'er the hills through wind and rain pour? Had you work that must be pushed in spite o' His work?'"

"I felt kind o' shamed then at my hurry, and I said, 'Doctor, you'll hae heard tell o' the calamity that has come to our house?' And he answered, 'I hae heard; but we willna call it a calamity, David, seeing that it was o' His ordering.'"

"It was very suddent, sir,' I said, and he lookit at me, and said, 'His messengers fly very swiftly. Your father was ready, and I do not think He calls the young men, unless He wants them. It was not of the dead you came to talk with me?' I said, 'No, sir, I came to ask you about Maggie and mysel'.'"

"Then I told him hoo I longed to be a minister, and hoo fayther and the rest had planned to send me to Aberdeen this vera year, and hoo there was still £50 which you wanted me to take, and he never said a word, but just let me go blethering and blundering through the story, till I felt like I was the maist selfish and foolish o' mortals. When I couldna find anither word, he spake up kind o' stern like—"

"What did he say? You be to tell me that noo."

"He said, 'David Promoter, you'll no dare to touch the £50 this year. Go back to the boats, and serve the Lord upon the sea for a twelve months. Go back to the boats and learn how to face hunger, and cold, and weariness, with patience; learn to look upon death, and not to fear him. Forbye you cannot leave your sister her lane. Lassies marry young among your folk, and she'll need some plenishing. You would not surely send her from you with empty hands. You cannot right your own like with wrangling hers, not even by a bawbee.'"

"He shouldna hae said the like o' that. The siller isna mine, nor wasna meant for me, and I'll ne'er touch it. That I wont." "Marry Angus Raith, and tak' it, Maggie. He loves you weel."

"Angus Raith isna to be thocht o', and it's ill-luck mixing wedding talk wi' death talk. The minister is right; whatna for are we hurrying up the future? Let us be still and wait; good, as well as evil comes, and us not looking for it. I'm sorry you didna hae a pleasanter visit."

"It wasna just unpleasant. I ken weel the minister is right. Put on a covering turf noo, Maggie, for the tide serves at six o'clock, and I'll be awa' to Largo the morn."

Maggie was up at gray dawn next morning, while yet the sea birds were dozing on their perches, looking like patches of late snow in the crannies of the black rocks. There was no wrath in the tide, only an irresistible set shoreward. When David was ready for his breakfast, Campbell was ready also; he said he wished to go with the boat, and David's face lighted up with satisfaction at the proposal. And Maggie was not ill-pleased to be left alone. She was restless, and full of strange thoughts, and needed the calm and strength of solitude.

It was an exquisite morning; the sea was dimpling and laughing in the sunrise, and great flocks of hungry white sea-birds were making for the Firth. Maggie folded her plaid around her, and walked to the little pier to see the boat away; and as she stood there, the wind blew the kerchief off her head into the water; and she saw Campbell lean forward and pick it up, and then nod back to her an assurance of its safety. She turned away half angry at herself for the thrill of pleasure the trifling incident had given her. "It's my ain folk I ought to be thinking o', and no strangers; it's the dead, and no the living that ought to be in my heart. Oh Maggie Promoter, whate'er has come o'er you!"

To such reflections she was hasting with bent head back to her cottage, And trying to avoid a meeting with any of the few men and women about so early. But she was soon sensible of a rapid step following her, and before she could turn her head, a large hand was laid upon her shoulder, and Angus Raith was at her side.

"Sae you thocht to shun me, Maggie."

"You are wrang there, I didna even see you, Angus."

"That's the God's truth. You havena e'en for any body noo, but that proud, fine gentleman that's staying wi' you."

"Be quiet, Angus. Hoo daur you say the like o'that? I ne'er saw the man's face until yestreen; you shouldna think ill o' folk sae easy."

"What does he want here amang fishers? They dinna want him, I'm vera sure. There's nae room for gentlemen in Pittenloch."

"Ask him what he wants. He pays for his room at Pittenloch; fourteen white shillings every week, he agreed wi' Davie for."

"Fourteen shillings!"

The magnitude of the sum astonished him. He walked silently by Maggie's side until she came to her door-step. He was a heavy-faced Celt; sallow, and dark-eyed; with the impatient look of a selfish greedy man. Maggie's resolute stand at her door-stone angered him, "I'm coming in a wee," he said dourly, "there are words to be said between us."

"You are wrang there too, Angus. I hae neither this, nor that, to say to you; and I'm busy the day."

"I spoke to your fayther and your brother Will, anent a marriage between us, and you heard tell o' it."

"Ay, they told me."

"And you let me walk wi' you frae the kirk on the next Sabbath.—I'm no going to be jilted, Maggie Promoter, by you."

"Dinna daur to speak that way to me, Angus. I never said I wad wed you, and I dinna believe I ever sall say it. Think shame o' yoursel' for speaking o' marrying before the tide has washed the footmarks o' the dead off the sea sands. Let go my hand, Angus."

"It is my hand, and I'll claim it as long as you live. And it will be ill for any ither body that daurs to touch it."

"Daur indeed! I'll no be daured by any body, manfolk or womanfolk. You hae gi'en me an insult, Angus Raith, and dinna cross my door-stane any more, till you get the invite to do so."

She stepped within her open door and faced him. Her eyes blazed, her whole attitude was that of defiance. The passions, which in well-bred women are educated clean down out of sight, were in Maggie Promoter's tongue tip and finger tips. Angus saw it would not do to anger her further, and he said, "I meant nae harm, Maggie."

"I'll no answer you anither word. And mind what I told you. Dinna cross my doorstane. You'll get the red face if you try it." She could have shut the door, but she would have thought the act a kind of humiliation. She preferred to stand guard at its threshold, until Angus, with a black scowl and some muttered words of anger, walked away. She watched him until he leaped into his boat; until he was fairly out to sea. Then she shut and barred the door; and sitting down in her father's chair, wept passionately; wept as women weep, before they have learned the uselessness of tears, and the strength of self-restraint.

CHAPTER III

THE CAMPBELLS OF MERITON

"We figure to ourselves
The thing we like, and then we build it up
As chance will have it, on the rock or sand."
"About some act,
That has no relish of salvation in it."

Upon the shores of Bute, opposite the rugged, heathery hills of Cowal, John Campbell had built himself a splendid habitation. People going up and Down the Kyles were in the habit of pointing out Meriton Mansion, and of asserting that the owner had risen from extreme poverty to his enviable position. There was not a word of truth in this story. John Campbell was the youngest son of Campbell of Drumloch, a gentleman of ancient lineage, and of considerable wealth. Alexander, his elder son, inherited from him the castle of Drumloch and the lands pertaining to the name and the estate; to his younger son John he gave a large sum of money. With this money he opened a shipping house on the Broomilaw of Glasgow, and gradually built a fleet of trading vessels, which traversed every known sea. John Campbell's name had indeed become synonymous for enterprise, wealth and commercial honor.

The tie between the brothers was always an affectionate one; and when Alexander died early in life, he left his child and the estate in charge of John. The estate was much embarrassed, the child was a delicate girl of nine years. But when ten years had passed the conditions of both were changed; Mary Campbell had grown to a sweet and charming womanhood, and Drumloch had paid off its last shilling of mortgage, and was as desirable an estate as could be found in the west of Scotland.

During these ten years, one desire had dominated all others in John Campbell's heart—the marriage of his son Allan to the heiress of Drumloch. It seemed to him the most natural of events, and also the most desirable. It would keep the old family and name, in the old home. It had been his brother's dying wish. He might buy his son a much larger and finer estate, but with gold he could not buy the family associations, and the long, honorable lineage of Drumloch. The old keep could be enlarged and beautified; the lands lying far and near could be bought and added to its domain; and yet Allan could lawfully call himself, "Campbell of Drumloch."

Thus to establish on a broader and richer basis the old home of his Fathers was the grand object of John Campbell's life. He thought of it until it became almost a sacred duty in his eyes. For the Scotsman's acquisitiveness is very rarely destitute of some nobler underlying motive. In fact, his granite nature is finely marbled throughout with veins of poetry and romance. His native land is never forgotten. His father's hearth is as sacred as an altar in his memory. A bluebell or a bit of heather can bring tears to his eyes; and the lilt of a Jacobite song make his heart thrill with an impossible loyalty. Those who saw John Campbell on the Broomilaw would have judged him to be a man indifferent to all things but money and bills of lading. Those who saw him softly stepping through the old halls of Drumloch, or standing almost reverently before the hard grim faces of his ancestors, would have called him an aristocrat who held all things cheap but an ancient home and a noble family. His son Allan, as the future Campbell of Drumloch, was an important person in his eyes; he took care that he was well educated, and early made familiar with the leisure and means of a fine gentleman. And as Allan was intelligent and handsome, with a stately carriage and courtly manners, there seemed no reason why the old root should not produce a new and far more splendid line.

When Mary Campbell was nineteen, and her estate perfectly clear, it seemed to her uncle a proper time to consummate the hopes for which he had toiled and planned. He explained them fully to his son, and then said, "Now, Allan, go and ask Mary to be your wife. The sooner I see you in your own place, the happier I shall be."

A spirit of contradiction sprang up in the young man's heart, as soon as the words were uttered. Probably, it was but the development of an antagonism that had been lying latent for years. He remained silent so long, that his father's anger rose.

"Have you nothing to say, sir?" he asked. "A good wife and an old and honorable estate are worth a few words of acknowledgment."

"I do not wish to marry Drumloch, sir." John Campbell turned white, and the paper in his hand shook violently. "Do you mean me to understand that I have been working ten years for a disappointment? I will not have ten Years of my life wasted to pleasure a foolish youth."

"Is it right for me to marry a woman I do not love, and so waste my whole life?"

A conversation begun in such a spirit was not likely to end satisfactorily. Indeed it closed in great anger, and the renewal of the subject day after day, only made both men more determined to stand by the position they had taken toward each other. Allan almost wondered at his own obstinacy. Before his father had so broadly stated the case to him, he had rather liked his cousin. She was a calm, cheerful, sensible girl, with very beautiful eyes, and that caressing, thoughtful manner which is so comfortable in household life. He believed that if he had been left any freedom of choice, he would have desired only Mary Campbell to be his wife. But he told himself that he would not be ordered into matrimony, or compelled to sacrifice his right of choice, for any number of dead-and-gone Campbells.

There was no prospect of any reconciliation between father and son, except by Allan's unconditional surrender. Allan did not regard this step as impossible in the future, but for the present he knew it was. He decided to leave home for a few months, and when the subject was opened again to be himself the person to move the question. He felt that in the matter of his own marriage he ought at least to make the proposition; it was enough for his father to agree to it. The trouble had arisen from the reversal of this natural order.

Mary had perceived that there was dissension between her uncle and cousin, but she had not associated herself with it. She was sure that it was about money, for evidently Allan had lived an extravagant life when he was abroad. So, when he said to her one morning, "Mary, father and I cannot agree at present, and I think I will go away for a few weeks;" she answered,—

"I think you are right, Allan. If one has a hurt, it does not do to be always looking at it, and touching it. If you have a quarrel with uncle, let it rest, and then it will heal. Do you want—any money, Cousin Allan? I have plenty, and I do not use it."

She spoke shyly with hesitation and blushes, but he felt all the kindness of the question. He took her hand and kissed it. At that moment she looked lovely to him.

"I have no need of money, Mary. I only ask for your kind remembrance."

"That is ever yours. Do not go far away."

"Not far. You shall hear from me soon."

The thought of a correspondence struck him very pleasantly. He might thus—if he liked the idea upon future reflection—arrange the whole matter with Mary, and return home as her expected husband. That would be a sufficient assertion of his own individuality.

He went to Edinburgh. He had no definite plan, only that he felt a desire for seclusion, and he knew fewer people in Edinburgh than in Glasgow or London. The day after his arrival there he accompanied a casual acquaintance to Leith pier, from which place the latter was going to sail for London. As he stood watching the vessel away, his hat blew off and a fisherman brought it back to him. It was Will Johnson of Pittenloch, and he was not a man to whom Allan felt he could offer money. But he stood talking with him about the Fife fishing towns, until he became intensely interested in

their life. "I want to see them," he said to Will; "let me have a couple of hours to get my trunks, and I will go with you to Pittenloch."

There are very few men who have not a native longing for the ocean; who do not love to go

"—back to the great, sweet Mother,
Mother and lover of men, the sea;"

and Allan forgot all his annoyances, as soon as he felt the bound of the boat under him. Johnson had to touch at Largo, but ere they reached it the wind rose, and it was with some difficulty the harbor was made. But during the rough journey Allan got very near to the men in the boat; he looked forward to a stay at Pittenloch with pleasure; and afterward, events would doubtless shape themselves better than he could at that time determine them.

It had been a sudden decision, and made very much in that spirit which leads men to toss up a penny for an oracle. And sometimes it seems as if a Fate, wise or otherwise, answers the call so recklessly made. If he lived for a century Allan knew that he would never forget that first walk to Promoters—the big fisherman at his side, the ocean roaring in his ears, the lights from the cottage windows dully gleaming through the black darkness—never forget that moment in which Maggie Promoter turned from the fire with the "cruisie" in her hand, the very incarnation of womanhood, crowned with perfect health and splendid beauty.

It was Allan's nature to drift with events, and to easily accommodate himself to circumstances. In France he had been a gay, fashionable trifler; in Germany cloudy philosophies and musical ideas had fascinated him; in Rome he had dreamed in old temples, and painted and smoked with the artists in their lofty shabby studios. He was equally ready to share the stirring danger and freedom of the fisher's life, for he was yet young enough to feel delight in physical exertion, and in physical danger.

When the boat went hammering through cheerless seas, and the lines were heavy with great ling fish, it was pleasure to match his young supple thews with those of the strongest men. And it was pleasure, when hungry and weary, to turn shoreward, and feel the smell of the peat smoke on the south-west wind, bringing the cottage hearth, and the welcome meal, and the beautiful face of Maggie Promoter nearer. Even when the weather was stormy, and it was a hurl down one sea, and a hoist up the next, when the forty foot mast had to be lowered and lashed down, and the heavy mizzen set in its place, Allan soon grew to enjoy the tumult and the fight, and his hand was always ready to do its share.

Very soon after going to the Promoters he procured himself some suits of fishers' clothing; and Maggie often thought when he came in from the sea, rosy and glowing, with his brown hair wet with the spindrift, nets on his shoulders, or lines in his hands, that he was the handsomest fisher-lad that ever sailed the Frith of Forth. David and Allan were much together, for David had gone back to the boats as the minister bade him, yet the duty had been made far easier than he expected. For when Allan understood how the Promoters' boat had failed them, he purchased a fishing skiff of his own, and David, and the men whom David hired, sailed her for her owner. David had his certain wage, the men had the fish, and Allan had a delight in the whole situation far greater than any mere pleasure yacht could possibly have given him.

Where there is plenty of money, events do not lag. In a couple of months the Promoters' cottage was apparently as settled to its new life as ever it had been to the old one. The "Allan Campbell" was a recognized craft in the fishing fleet, and generally Allan sailed with her as faithfully as if his life depended upon the catching of the gray fish. And when the sea-mood was not on him, he had another all-sufficing occupation. For he was a good amateur painter, and he was surrounded by studies almost irresistible to an artistic soul.

The simple folk of Pittenloch looked dubiously at him when he stood before his easel. There was to them something wonderful, mysterious, almost uncanny, in the life-like reproduction of themselves and their boats, their bits of cottages, and their bare-footed bairns—in the painted glimpses of the

broad-billowed ocean; and the desolate old hills, with such forlorn lights on their scarps, as the gloom of primeval tempests might have cast.

The controversy about these bits of painted canvas interested every one in the village; for though Allan talked beautifully about "looking up" through nature unto nature's God, it was a new doctrine to the Fife fishers; who had always looked for God in their Bibles, and their consciences. Except in rare cases, it was impossible for them to conceive how painting might be a Gate Beautiful to the temple.

Indeed Elder John Mackelvine, a dour, stern, old Calvinist, was of opinion that every picture was a breaking of the second commandment—"A makin' o' an image and likeness o' the warks o' God, and sae, neither mair nor less than idolatry. Forbye, pictur's are pairfectly ridic'lus," he continued; "what for, will you want the image o' a thing, when you hae the thing itsel'? John Knox kent weel what he was doing when he dinged doon a' the pictur's and images in thae auld kirks. He kent men were aye mair pleased to worship their ain handywark, than the Creator's."

David listened with many misgivings, but he ventured to say that, "there was nae thocht o' idolatry in Allan Campbell's heart."

"You'll dootless ken a' about it, Davie," answered Mackelvine scornfully; "but you'll no deny that he was sae set up wi' the pictur' he made o' Largo Bay, that he might just as weel hae bowed doon to it. The Everlasting hills! The everlasting seas!" said the old fisher, man, rising and stretching upward and outward his bare, brown arm, "put them in a paintin'! Pairfect nonsense! Even-down sin!"

From this conversation David went directly home. It was Saturday night and the boats all in harbor for the Sabbath day. The house place was spotlessly clean, the evening meal waiting. As soon as David spoke to his sister, Allan opened his door and called him. "Come here, David Promoter, I want to show you something."

David guessed that it was a new picture, and he went a little reluctantly.

"This is an 'interior', David," he said excitedly; "it is the first I have ever tried, and I am so pleased with the result;—what do you think of it?"

David slowly approached the easel. The picture represented faithfully the living room of his own cottage. All its breadths of light and shade, all its telling contrasts, were used skilfully as a background for Maggie. She was gazing with a white anxious face out of the little window seaward, watching the gathering storm, and the fishing boats trying to make the harbor through it.

"What do you think of it, David?"

"It is wonderfu', sir; but I dinna approve o' it. I think you will hae nae right to put the fear o' death and dool, and the breaking hearts o' women into a pictur'. Forbye, you might sell it, and I wouldna like my sister—no to speak o' my hame—to be turned into siller. And there's mair to say, sir. Some o' oor folk think it isna lawfu' in the sight o' God to mak' the image o' anything; and seeing, sir, that I humbly hope some day to stand upon the altar steps, it would ill become me to hurt the conscience o' auld or young. I must walk circumspect for the vera hope's sake."

"I never thought of selling a picture, David; I would not sell one with your sister in it, for all the gold in Scotland. And this is the first time I have heard of your intention regarding the ministry. Why did you not tell me before? How gladly I would have helped you!"

"It is a hope I dinna let mysel' think o' just yet, sir. Dr. Balmuto bid me bide in the boats for a twelve months, and, you ken, I couldna leave Maggie her lane, here."

"Perhaps Maggie will marry." He dropped each word slowly, as if it gave him pain.

"Ay; I hope she will. There was mair than one word spoken about a lad in the village; but after oor great loss, she wouldna hear tell o' any lad; and the minister thocht we might weel wait thegither for one year onyway. He'd be right, dootless."

"David, after tea let us take a walk on the beach together. I have something to say to you."

CHAPTER IV MAGGIE AND ANGUS

"What thing thou doest, bravely do;
When Heaven's clear call hath found thee"

"All thoughts, all passions, all delights
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame."

It was an exquisite evening toward the end of May; with a purple sunset brightening the seaward stretches, and the gathering herring fleet slowly drifting in the placid harbor. They walked silently toward a little rocky promontory, and there sat down. Allan's face was turned full toward his companion.

"David," he said, "I have lived with you ten weeks; slept under your roof, and eaten of your bread. I want you to remember how many happy hours we have spent together. At your fireside, where I have read aloud, and Maggie and you have listened—"

"Ay, sir. We hae had some fine company there. Poets, preachers, great thinkers and warkers o' all kinds. I'll ne'er forget thae hours."

"Happy hours also, David, when we have drifted together through starlight and moonlight, on the calm sea; and happy hours when we have made harbor together in the very teeth of death. I owe to you, David, some of the purest, healthiest and best moments of my life. I like to owe them to you. I don't mind the obligation at all. But I would be glad to show you that I am grateful. Let me pay your university fees. Borrow them of me. I am a rich man. I waste upon trifles and foolishness every year more than enough. You can give me this great honor and pleasure, David; don't let any false pride stand between us." He laid his hand upon David's hand, and looked steadily in his face for the answer.

"God, dootless, put the thocht in your heart. I gie Him and you thanks for it. And I'll be glad o' your help. Dr. Balmuto spake o' a year in the boats; when it is gane I'll tak' your offer, sir."

"You must not wait a year, David. You must try and be ready to go to Aberdeen, or Edinburgh, or Glasgow in the autumn. What do you think of Glasgow? The dear gray old college in the High Street! I went there myself, David, and I have many friends among its professors."

"I'd like Glasca',—fine."

"Then it shall be Glasgow; and I will see Dr. Balmuto. He will not oppose your going, I am sure."

"About Maggie, sir? I couldna seek my ain pleasure or profit at her loss. She doesna tak', like other lasses do, to the thocht o' marriage; and I canna bear to say a cross word to her. She is a' I have."

"There must be some way of arranging that matter. Tell Maggie what I have said, and talk affairs over with her. She will be sure to find out a way."

The conversation was continued for hours. Every contingency was fully discussed, and Allan was much pleased with David's prudence and unselfishness. "I think you will make a good minister," he said, "and we will all yet be very proud of you."

"I sall do my duty, sir, all o' it. I sall neither spare sin nor sinner. My ain right eye sall nae be dear to me, if it wad win a thocht frae His wark."

His pale face was lit as by some interior light, his eyes full of enthusiasm. He sat asking questions concerning the manners and methods of universities, the professors and lectures, and books and

students, until the late moon rose red and solemn, above the sea and sky line, and Allan knew then it was almost midnight.

"We must go home, David. Maggie will wonder what has happened. We should have thought of her before this hour."

Indeed when they came near the cottage they saw Maggie standing at the door watching for them. She went in and closed it as soon as she perceived that all was well, and when the laggards would have explained their delay, she was too cross to listen to them.

"It's maist the Sabbath day," she said, hiding her fretfulness behind conscientious scruples, as all of us are ready to do. "I hope it wasna your ain thoughts and words you were sae ta'en up wi'; but I'm feared it was. You wadna hae staid sae lang, wi' better anes."

She would not look at Allan, and it pained him to see upon her face the traces of anxiety and disappointment.

Far through the night he sat at his open window, gazing out upon the sea, which was breaking almost below it. The unshed tears in Maggie's eyes, and her evident trouble at his absence, had given him a heart pain that he could not misunderstand. He knew that night that he loved the woman. Not with that low, earthy affection, which is satisfied with youth, or beauty of form or color. His soul clave unto her soul. He longed to kiss her heavy eyes and troubled mouth, not because they were lovely, but because his heart ached to soothe the sorrow he had given her, and longed to comfort her with happy hopes for the future.

But he had seen enough of these honest-hearted fisher-women, to know that the smallest act of tenderness was regarded by them as a promise. Of that frivolous abuse of the sweetest things which is called flirtation, Maggie had not the faintest conception. If it could have been explained to her, she would have recoiled from it with shame and indignation.

She would not have comprehended that a man should admire her, and tell her that he loved her, unless he intended to make her his wife.

And Allan was not prepared to admit this conclusion to the intercourse which had been so sweet, so inexpressibly sweet. He knew that her simple presence was a joy to him. He could see that her shining eyes grew brighter at his approach, and that her face broke up like happy music as he talked to her. "She is the other half of my own soul," he said, "and my life can never be complete without her. But what a mockery of Fate to bring us together. I cannot fall to her station; I cannot raise her to mine. I ought to go away, and I will. In a little while she will forget me."

The thought angered and troubled him; he tossed restlessly to and fro until daybreak, and then fell into a heavy slumber. And he dreamed of Mary Campbell. His heart was full of Maggie, but he dreamed of Mary; and he wondered at the circumstance, and though he was hardly conscious of the fact, it made him a trifle cooler and more restrained in his intercourse with Maggie. And Maggie thought of her bad temper the previous night, and she was ashamed and miserable.

At irregular intervals, as occasion served, he had gone into Edinburgh, and when there, he had always made an opportunity for writing to Meriton. Mary therefore concluded that he was staying in Edinburgh, and John Campbell did not fret much over the absence of a son who could be recalled easily in a few hours. He understood that Allan was in correspondence with his Cousin Mary, and he would not admit a doubt of the final settlement of the Drumloch succession in the way he desired.

And undoubtedly the result of Allan's long self-examination was a resolve to tear himself away from Maggie Promoter, and return to his home and his evident duty. He could show his regard for the Promoters by interesting himself in David's advancement. Maggie would understand his motives. She would know what he suffered by her own sufferings, but the weary ache would die out finally, and leave only in each heart a tender memory which perhaps they might carry into another life, "if both should not forget." He almost wept as he made this mental funeral of his dearest hopes; yet he made it frequently during the following days, and he was making it so earnestly as he walked into Kinkell to see Dr. Balmuto, that he was at the manse before he had realized that he was on the road to it.

The doctor had seen him frequently in Kirk, but always in such clothes as the fishers wore. He glanced at the elegantly dressed young man and recognized him. Then he lifted the card which Allan had sent in as his introduction, and said sharply, "Good morning, Mr. Campbell. I have seen you often lately—in fisher's dress. I hope you have a good reason for the masquerade, for let me tell you, I know something of John Campbell, your father, and I doubt if you have his approval."

"I must ask you, doctor, to take my motives on trust for the present. I assure you I think they are good ones. But I came here this morning to speak of David Promoter. I have been staying with him for some weeks. I respect and admire him. I desire out of my abundance to help him."

"He is a proud lad. I doubt if he will let you."

"He is quite willing that I should have this pleasure, if he has your permission. I wish him to go to Glasgow this autumn; he says you told him to stay in the boats for a year."

"I did; but I may have made a mistake. I thought he was a little uplifted with himself. He spoke as if he were needful to the church—but the lad may have felt the spirit in him. I would not dare to try and quench it. Your offer is a providence; it is as if God put out his own hand and Opened the kirk door for him. Tell David Promoter I said, 'Go to Glasgow, and the Lord go with thee.' But what is to come of his sister? She is a very handsome girl," and he looked sharply at Allan, "is she going to marry?"

"I have asked nothing concerning that question, sir."

"I am very glad to hear you say that; glad for her sake, glad for yours also."

Then the subject of the Promoters was gradually dropped; although Allan spent the day at Kinkell manse. For the doctor was a man with a vivid mind. Though he was old he liked to talk to young men, liked to hear them tell of their studies, and friendships, and travels, and taste through their eager conversation the flavor of their fresher life. Allan remained with him until near sunset, then in the warm, calm gloaming, he slowly took the homeward route, down the precipitous crags and hills.

At a sudden turn of the path near the beach, he saw Maggie. She sat upon a rock so directly beneath him that he could have let his handkerchief fall into her lap. Her arms were dropped, her attitude listless; without seeing her face, Allan was certain that her eyes were sad, and her long gaze at the incoming tide full of melancholy. He was just going to speak, when he saw a man coming toward her at a rapid pace. It was Angus Raith, and Allan was conscious of a sharp pang of annoyance and jealousy.

He had no intention to watch them, neither had he any desire to meet Angus while he was with Maggie. That would have been a little triumph for Angus, which Allan did not intend to give him. So he determined to remain where he was until they had either parted or gone away together. He was undoubtedly angry. It never struck him that the meeting might be an accidental one. He was certain that, for some reason or other, Maggie had an appointment with her well-known admirer; and he said bitterly to himself, "Like to like, why should I have the heart-ache about her?"

The sound of their voices, in an indistinct, fitful way, reached him where he sat. At first there was nothing peculiar in the tone, but in a few minutes it was evident that Maggie was getting angry. Allan rose then and went slowly toward them. Where the hill touched the beach it terminated in a point of jagged rocks about seven feet high. Maggie and Angus stood on one side of them, Allan on the other. He was as yet unseen, but half-a-dozen steps would bring them together. Maggie was by this time in a passion.

"It is weel for you, Angus Raith, that my fayther is at the bottom o' the sea," she said. "If Will was alive, or John, or Sandy, this day, ye hadna daured to open your ill mouth to me."

"Why dinna you tell your fine brother Davie?"

"Davie is aboon sorting the like o' you. Do you think I wad hae hands that are for the Ordinances touch you, you—born deevil?"

"Tell Maister Allan Campbell then. If a's true that's said to be true—"

"Dinna say it, Angus! Dinna say it! I warn you to keep a still tongue in your head."

"If he isna your man, he ought to be."

In a moment she had struck him on the mouth a blow so swift and stinging that it staggered him. Allan heard it; he stepped quickly forward and put his hand upon her shoulder. She was quivering like a wounded bird. But she drew herself proudly away from Allan's touch and faced Angus in a blaze of scornful passion.

"Ay; strike me back! It wad be like you!" For the first impulse of the man on recovering himself had been to raise his hand. "But I'd rayther you struck me dead at your feet, than to be your wife for ane five minutes."

Angus laughed mockingly. "You kent wha was behind the rock dootless! The blank—blank—blank fine gentleman! The—the—the—" and a volley of epithets and imprecations followed which made Maggie put her hands to her ears.

"Let me take you home." It was Allan who spoke, and again he laid his hand gently upon her. She shook it angrily off. "Dinna touch me, sir!" she cried, "I hae had scorn and sorrow in plenty for you. I can tak' mysel' hame finely;" and she walked rapidly away with her head flung proudly backward.

The girl had never been taught to control her feelings. She was a natural woman suffering under a sense of insult and injustice, and resenting it. And she was angry at Allan for being a witness to her emotion. His very calmness had seemed like a reproof to her. Wrath, chagrin, shame, resentment, swept in hot passionate waves over her; and the very intensity of her mental anguish imparted to her body a kind of majesty that perforce commanded respect.

Never had Allan thought her so beautiful. The words of irrevocable Devotion were on his lips. But at that moment had he been king of Scotland, Maggie Promoter would not have stayed to listen to them. So he turned to Angus. The man, with an insolent, defiant face, stood leaning against the rock. He had taken out his pipe, and with an assumption of indifference was trying to light it. Every trick of self-defence was known to Allan. He could have flung Angus to the ground as easily as a Cumberland shepherd throws the untrained wrestler, but how little honor, and how much shame, there would be in such an encounter! He looked steadily at the cowardly bully for a moment, and then turning on his heel, followed Maggie. The mocking laugh which Angus sent after him, did not move any feeling but contempt; he was far more anxious to comfort and conciliate the suffering, angry woman, than to revenge himself upon so despicable an enemy.

But when he arrived at the cottage the door was shut. This was so rarely its condition that he could not help feeling that Maggie had intentionally put him away from her presence. He was miserable in his uncertainty, he longed to comfort the womanhood he had heard outraged, but he was not selfish enough to intrude upon a desired solitude, although as he slowly walked up and down before the closed door, he almost felt the chafing of the wounded heart behind it.

And Maggie, in all her anger and humiliation, was not insensible to Allan's position. As she rocked herself to and fro, and wept and moaned Without restraint, she was conscious of the man who respected her unjust humiliation too much to intrude upon it, even with his sympathy: who comprehended her so well, as to understand that even condolence might be an additional offence. She could not have put the feeling into words, and yet she clearly understood that there are some sorrows which it is the truest kindness to ignore.

In about half-an-hour the first vehemence of her grief was over. She stood up and smoothly snooded back her hair; she dried her eyes, and then looked cautiously out of the window. In the dim light, Allan's tall graceful figure had a commanding aspect, greatly increased in Maggie's eyes by the fashionable clothing he wore that day. As she watched him, he stood still and looked toward the sea; and his attitude had an air of despondency that she could not endure to witness. She went to the door, set it wide open, and stood upon its threshold until Allan came near.

"I dinna mean to shut you oot, sir," she said sadly, "you are aye welcome."

"Thank you, Maggie."

His voice was grave, almost sorrowful, and he went at once to his own room. That was precisely what Maggie felt he ought under the circumstances to do; and yet she had a perverse anger at him for doing it.

"He might hae said, 'it's a fine night;' or 'has Davie come hame?' or the like o' that," she whispered; "I'll hae lost his liking forever mair, anda' for Angus Raith's ill tongue. I wish I had keep't my temper, but that is past wishing for." Then a sudden thought struck her, and she knocked gently at Allan's door.

"Is that you, Maggie?"

"Yes, sir. I want to speak a word wi' you. Will you come ben a minute?"

He responded at once to her desire—"What is it, Maggie?" he asked.

"If it please you, sir, I dinna want Davie to ken anything anent to-night's ill-words and ill-wark."

"I think that is a very wise decision."

"No gude can come o' telling what's ill, and if you wad believe me, sir, I'm vera, vera sorry, for my share in it."

Her eyelids were dropped, they trembled visibly, and there was a pathetic trouble and humiliation in her beautiful face. Allan was sick with restrained emotion. He longed to fold the trembling, wounded woman to his heart. He fully believed that he had the power to kiss back the splendor of beauty and joy into her pale face; and it would have been the greatest felicity earth could grant him, to do so. Yet, for honor's sake, he repressed the love and the longing in his heart, and stood almost cold and unresponsive before her.

"I am vera, vera sorry," she repeated. "The man said words I couldna thole, and sae—I struck him."

"I do not blame you, Maggie. It would be a delight to me to strike him as he deserves to be struck. For your sake, I kept my hands off the wretch. To-morrow, before all his mates, if you say so, I will punish him."

"Na, na, na; that is the thing I'm feared for I dinna want my name in everybody's lips; and you ken, sir, hoo women-folks talk anent women. They'd say; 'Weel, weel, there's aye fire where there's smoke,' and the like o' that, and they wad shake their heads, and look oot o' the corner o' their e'en, and I couldna thole it, sir."

"There is David to remember also. Dr. Balmuto thinks with me. He is to go to Glasgow College in the autumn, and a quarrel might now be a bad thing for his whole life. He wants every hour for study, he has no time for Angus Raith I think."

"Thank you, sir—and if you wad try and forget the shame put upon me, and no quite tak' away the gude will you had for me, I'd be vera grateful and happy." And she covered her eyes with her left hand, and shyly put out the right one to Allan.

"Oh, Maggie! Maggie!" he said almost in a whisper, "you little know how you try me! Dear girl, forget all, and be happy!" And as her hand lay in his hand, his eyes fell upon it. It was a brown hand, large, but finely formed, the hand of a sensitive, honorable, capable woman. It was the hand with which she had struck Angus Raith; yet Allan bowed his head to it, and left both a kiss and a tear on its palm.

CHAPTER V A PARTING

"Each on his own strict line we move
And some find death ere they find love,
So far apart their lives are thrown
From the twin soul that halves their own."

"Oh, nearest, farthest! Can there be
At length some hard-earned heart-won home,
Where—exile changed for Sanctuary—
Our lot may fill indeed its sum,
And you may wait and I may come?"

About twelve o'clock the wind rose, there was a rattling breeze and a tossing sea all night; and David did not return until the early morning tide. Allan was roused from sleep by young Johnson singing,—

"We cast our line in Largo Bay."

and soon after he heard David greet Maggie in an unusually cheerful manner. He was impatient to tell him the good news, and he dressed hurriedly, and went into the house place. Maggie was scattering the meal into the boiling water for breakfast; and David, weary with his night work, sat drowsing in his father's big chair. Maggie had already been out in the fresh, wet breeze, and she had a pink kerchief tied over her hair; but she blushed a deeper pink, as she shyly said, "Gude morning, sir."

Then David roused himself—"Hech, sir!" he cried, "I wish you had been wi' us last night. It was just a joy to feel the clouds laying their cheeks to the floods, and the sea laying its shouther to the shore; I sat a' night wi' the helm-heft in my hand, singing o'er and o'er again King David's grand sea sang—

"The floods, O Lord, hae lifted up
They lifted up their voice;
The floods have lifted up their waves
And made a mighty noise.
But yet the Lord, that is on high,
Is more of might by far
Than noise of many waters is,
Or great sea-billows are."

[Footnote: Psalm 93. Version allowed by General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland.]

"And I couldna help thinking," he continued, "that the Angels o' Power, doing His will, wad be likely aye to tak' the sea road. It's freer o' men-folk, and its mair fu' o' the glory o' God."

"I am glad you had such a grand night, David. It is well to take a fine farewell of anything, and it was your last fishing. Dr. Balmuto sends you this word about Glasgow University—'go, and the Lord go with thee.' He has given me a letter to a professor there, who will choose the books you want, and set you the lessons you are to learn between now and the opening of the classes in September. The books are to be the doctor's gift to you. He would hear tell of nothing else."

David was as one that dreams for a moment; but his excitement soon conquered his happy amazement. He had to put his breakfast aside.

"I dinna want to eat," he said, "my soul is satisfied. I feel as if I ne'er could be hungry any mair." He was particularly delighted at the minister's kindness, and said fervently, "I thank him for the books, far mair for the blessing." He took all the favors to be done him without dispute or apology, just as a candid, unselfish child, takes what love gives it. He was so anxious to get to work, that he would liked to have left at once for Glasgow; but Allan was not ready to leave. Indeed he was "swithering" whether, or not, he should take this opportunity of bidding farewell to Pittenloch.

After breakfast they went to the boat together. The decks were covered With a mass of glinting, shimmering fish, that looked like molten silver in the sunshine. "David," said Allan, "make the boys clean her thoroughly, and in smooth water you can now use her as a study. Maggie dislikes men about the house all day; you can bring your books and papers to the boat and drift about in smooth water. On the sea there will be no crying children and scolding mothers to disturb you."

The idea delighted David; he began at once to carry it out; but Allan took no further interest in the matter, and went strolling up the beach until he came to the spot where the quarrel of the preceding evening had taken place. Here he stood leaning against the rock unconscious of outside influences for neatly two hours. He asked himself "did he love Maggie Promoter?" "Did she love him?" "Was there any hope in the future for their marriage?"

Then he acknowledged to his soul that the woman was inexpressibly dear to him. As for Maggie's love of himself, he hoped, and yet he feared it; feared it, because he loved her so well that he did not like to think of the suffering she must bear with him. He felt that no prospect of their marriage could be entertained. He loved his father, and not only respected, but also in some measure shared his family pride. He felt that it would be a sin to desert him, and for his own private pleasure crumble the unselfish life-work of so many years to pieces. Then also, beautiful as Maggie was in her cot at Pittenloch, she would be sadly out of place in the splendid rooms at Meriton. Sweet, intoxicatingly sweet, the cup which he had been drinking, but he felt that he must put it away from his own, and also from Maggie's lips. It would be fatal to the welfare of both.

Thinking such thoughts, he finally went back to the cottage. It was about ten o'clock; Maggie's house work was all "redd up;" and she was standing at her wheel spinning, when Allan's shadow fell across the sanded floor, and she turned to see him standing watching her.

"You are hame soon, sir. Is a' well wi' you?"

"No, Maggie, all is not well. If all had been well, I had never been in Pittenloch." She stopped her wheel and stood looking at him. Then he plunged at once into the story, which he had determined to tell her. "I had a quarrel with my father and I left home. He does not know where I am."

"You hae done very wrang I'm fearing, sir. He'll hae been a gude fayther to you?"

"Yes, very good. He has given me love, education, travel, leisure, wealth, my own way, in all things but one."

"Then, you be to call yoursel' a bad son. I didna think it o' you, sir."

"But, Maggie, that one thing includes all my future life. If I obey him, I must always be miserable."

"It will be about some leddy?" asked Maggie, and she spoke in a low restrained voice.

"Yes, about my cousin. She is very rich, and if I marry her, Maggie, I shall unite the two branches of our family, and take it back to its ancient home."

"Your fayther has the right to ask that much o' you. He's been lang gude to you."

"I did not ask him to be good. I did not ask for my life, but life having been given me, I think I have the right to do as I desire with it."

"There is nane o' us, sir, hae the right to live for, or to, oursel's. A tree doesna ask to be planted, but when it is planted, it bears fruit, and gies shadow, cheerfully. It tholes storms, and is glad in the sunshine, and if it didna bear fruit, when it was weel cared for, it wad deserve to be cut doon and

burnt. My bonnie rose bush didna ask me to plant it, yet it is bending wi' flowers for my pleasure. Your fayther will hae the right to say what you shall do to pay back his love and care."

"But when I do not love the lady I am desired to marry?"

"Tuts!" She flung her head back a little scornfully with the word. "There's few folks ken what love is."

"Do you, Maggie?"

"What for wad I ken? Is the leddy bonnie?"

"Very sweet and gentle and kind."

"Does she like you?"

"We have been long together. She likes me, as you like David."

"Will she want to be your wife? That's what I mean, sir."

"I think not. A man cannot know such a thing as that, until he asks."

She looked sharply at him, and blushed crimson. "Then you hae never asked her?"

"I have never asked her. My father wants me to do so, and I refused."

"You are feared she'll tak' you?"

"Just so, Maggie. Now what would you advise me to do?"

"You wouldna do the thing I told you. Whatna for then, should I say a word?"

"I think I should do what you told me. I have a great respect for your good sense, Maggie. I have never told my trouble to anyone but you."

"To naebody?"

"Not to any one."

"Wait a wee then, while I think it o'er. I must be sure to gie you true counsel, when you come to me sae trustful."

She set the wheel going and turned her face to it for about five minutes. Then she stilled it, and Allan saw that the hand she laid upon it trembled violently.

"You should gae hame, sir; and you should be as plain and trustful wi' your cousin, as you hae been wi' me. Tell the leddy just hoo you love her, and ask her to tak' you, even though you arena deserving o' her. Your fayther canna blame you if she willna be your wife. And sae, whether she says 'na,' or 'yes,' there will be peace between you twa."

"That is cutting a knot with a vengeance, Maggie."

"Life isna lang enough to untie some knots."

Then with her head still resolutely turned from Allan, she put by the wheel, and went into her room, and locked its door. Her face was as gray as ashes. She sat with clenched hands, and tight-drawn lips, and swayed her body backwards and forwards like one in an extremity of physical anguish.

"Oh Allan! Allan! You hae killed me!" she whispered; "you hae broken my heart in twa."

As she did not return to him, Allan went to his room also, and fell asleep; a sleep of exhaustion, not indifference. Maggie's plan had struck him at first as one entirely impracticable with a refined, conventional girl like Mary Campbell; but when a long dreamless rest had cleared and refreshed his mind, he began to think that the plan, primitive as it was, might be a good one. In love, as well as geometry, the straight line might be the easiest and best.

But he had no further opportunity to discuss it with her. David's trip to Glasgow was a very important affair to him, and he stayed at home in the afternoon to prepare for it. Then Maggie had her first hard lesson in self-restraint. All her other sorrows had touched lives beside her own; tears and lamentations had not only been natural, they had been expected of her. But now she was brought face to face with a grief she must hide from every eye. If a child is punished, and yet forbidden to weep, what a tumult of reproach and anguish and resentment is in the small pathetic face! Maggie's face was the reflex of a soul in just such a position. She blamed Allan, and she excused him in the same moment. The cry in her heart was "why didna he tell me? Why didna he tell me before it was

o'er late? He kent weel a woman be to love him! He should hae spoken afore this! But it's my ain fault! My ain fault! I ought to think shame o' mysel' for giving what was ne'er sought."

David noticed the pale anguish of her cheeks and mouth, and the look of terror in her eyes, but he thought her trouble was entirely on his own account. "Dinna fret about me, Maggie," he said kindly, "I am going where I hae been sent, and there's nae ill thing will come to me. And we sall hae the summer thegither, and plenty o' time to sort the future comfortable for you. Why, lassie, you sall come wi' me to Glasca', rayther than I'll hae you looking sae broken-hearted."

It was not a pleasant evening. Allan was packing his best pictures and some clothing. David was also busy. The house was upside down, and there was no peace anywhere. Maggie's one hope was, that she would be able to bear up until they were gone. Fortunately the tide served very early, and almost at daylight she called the travelers for their breakfast. They were both silent, and perhaps no one was sorry when those few terrible minutes of approaching farewells were over. At the last, with all her efforts, Maggie could not keep back her tears, and David's black, shiny eyes were dim and misty also.

"Few men hae sae kind-hearted a sister as I hae," he said gratefully. Scotch families are not demonstrative in their affections; very seldom in all her life had Maggie kissed her brother, but when he stood with his bonnet in his hand, and the "good-bye" on his lips, she lifted her face and kissed him tenderly. Allan tried to make the parting a matter of little consequence. "We shall be back in a few days, Maggie;" he said cheerily. "David is only going for a pleasuring"—and he held out his hand and looked her brightly in the face. So they went into the boat, and she watched them out of harbor; and Allan long remembered how grandly beautiful she was, standing at the very edge of the land, with the sunshine falling all over her, the wind blowing backward her hair and her plaid, and her white bare arm raised above her head in a last adieu. He saw her turn slowly away, and he knew how her heart ached by the sharpness of the pain in his own.

She went back to the desolate untidy house and fastened the door, and drew the curtains, and sat down full of misery, that took all light and hope out of her life. She did not lose herself in analysis; the tide of sorrow went on rising, rising, until it submerged her. Accustomed to draw all her reflections from the Bible, she moaned out "Lover and friend thou hast put far from me." Ah! there is no funeral so sad to follow as the funeral of our first love, and all its wonderful hopes.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.