

even his own inheritance in an effort to aid her cause and the cause of the clansmen by securing the removal of MacTavish.

Whatever Allan's hopes had been, they had not come from any word of encouragement from Flora McIntyre. Even when convinced of the hopelessness of his suit, he had served her as best as he could.

And now the man was dead—dead even in the moment when a new life with a promise of better things was opening before him. Craig's heart softened with pity. He glanced at Flora and noted that her lashes were heavy with unshed tears.

"Flora—Flora," he said humbly. "I understand now. I cannot tell you how all this—confounds me. I have blundered sadly. I—I must ask your forgiveness."

Again the mischief played about her mouth and twinkled in her eyes.

"You do not insist on my answering that question?" she queried demurely, her head on one side.

"No—no. It does not matter now."

"Then you shall know." She laid her hand on his arm and looked up into his face.

"Once and once only did Allan come to our home and on that occasion his conduct was that of a gentleman. He apologised for his rudeness, the day—that day you fought with him, and for the Laird's persecution of my father. There was that about him that carried conviction, and before he left me, he pledged me his word that never again would his hand be lifted against us. He even attempted to assist me by a gift of money, which I—I refused.

"A month later when I had lost all hope of your return, our home was without provisions—another day and my mother would have been hungry. I—I—had decided to ask him for a loan. But I could not. I was about to destroy the very sheet of paper on which I had written his address when you came. It was that which I dropped in the hearth, and has cost us all this—this misery.

"And the day you came upon us—in the lane—we had