

Jeannie Sinclair, OR, THE LILY OF THE STRATH.

CHAPTER XX.

A MURDERER'S RESTLESSNESS AND ANXIETY—LYNEDOCH SINCLAIR TAKES REVENGE.

'Oh, Maister Lynedoch, Maister Lynedoch,' cried John, bursting with excitement, 'sic news, sic extraordinary news!'

Lynedoch turned slowly round, and awaited the approach with the most careless air.

'What's the matter?' he inquired. 'Why, what a state you are in. Have you seen a warlock on the way?'

'Oh, Maister Lynedoch, it's nae jokin matter. It's something that nearly concerns you. Sir Fergus is amissin!'

'Amising, you fool! What mean you by that nonsense?'

'It's nae nonsense ava; it's a doornicht fact. Sir Fergus, I say, is amissin. He gaed out tae shoot yesterday mornin', and has ne'er come back.'

'Pooh, what about that? He will return when it suits him, I suppose.'

'But they are feared something has happened him, and the hall folk o' the Strath has been seekin' him a' day on the Muir.'

'Indeed! The people are easily alarmed. Depend upon it, Sir Fergus will come back in due time.'

'But if he shouldna, Maister Lynedoch? If he has chanced tae frae a rock and killed himself, or gif his gun has gane aff o' its main accord and shot him, you, Maister Lynedoch, are the Baronet o' Balgley, and a great and a rich man.'

'I don't look for such good luck, John,' replied Lynedoch. 'But touching this foolish alarm which his absence has caused, who are smitten by it—none but the Castle people, I suppose?'

'Ye are wrang there, Maister Lynedoch, clean wrang. A' the Strath, high and low, are on the search, and if there's ane word o' him the night, they are gaun to scour the hills the morn. Word! has been sent tae Shawheid, and the Sheriff and the Fiscal are tae be owr.'

'Bless me, there is a commotion, indeed. How foolish they will feel when Sir Fergus returns to laugh at their frenzy.'

'Laugh or no laugh, they are in a bonny pickle, and I maun awa, and tell Nance about it. My wordie! she'll nae tak' the thing as you.'

'So saying, John made his way into the kitchen of the Tower; and Lynedoch having extracted the information he sought, retired to the solitude of his own chamber to muse over it.'

It was something significant that no one was dispatched specially to the Tower with the news. Doubtless he would be communicated with on the morrow—perchance the Sheriff or the Fiscal would visit him, in which case he would need all his self-command to sustain the interview.

The morrow came and promised to pass in the same manner. From his place of observation on the top of the Tower, Lynedoch saw at an early hour the searchers go across the level moorland towards the hills, behind which they were lost to his view. For hours thereafter the scene presented its usual quietude and solitary stillness. Impelled by the uneasy restlessness of his soul, he ascended the Tower many times during the day in the hope of discerning something which would give him information as to what was passing, but these visits, one after another, proving vain, he retired at length to his chamber to entertain in privacy his unenviable thoughts. Thus he was absent from his post of observation at a time when he could have beheld something which would have struck his guilty soul with repitiation, if not with utter dismay. This was the procession of people carrying the body of Sir Fergus in the direction of the Castle. With his telescope Lynedoch could easily have seen this, as also a small group of four or six which had separated from the procession, and were coming towards the Tower. But being in his room, he was ignorant of these movements, and was, therefore, taken by surprise, when he heard a tramping of feet on the stone stair, and John Cross opened his chamber door in great excitement, ushering in the Sheriff, the Fiscal, and three constables.

The two first mentioned, Lynedoch at once recognized, and he bowed to them with grave dignity. He divined their mission to be to intimate to him, in an official form, the disappearance of the Baronet, but the presence of the constables in their company was to him a matter of some surprise.

Lynedoch's grave bow was as gravely returned, and they stood facing each other for some moments in silence, his visitors, one and all, bending on Lynedoch a keen and a steady look.

The Fiscal, as became his office, assumed the duty of spokesman.

'We come on a painful visit to you, Mr. Sinclair,' he observed.

'Regarding the disappearance of my cousin, I presume, I heard of the fact only last night, and that so accidentally. My servant was on an errand at the hamlet, and he brought to me the intelligence that Sir Fergus had been missing since the day before, and that the people in the district were making search for him. I marvel much that I was not apprised of the fact at once, instead of being left to learn it so accidentally. But I was in hopes that the alarm was a needless one, and that my cousin had returned ere this. That he has not done so I assume from your visit.'

'Mr. Sinclair,' returned the Fiscal, 'we are here regarding, not the disappearance, but the murder of Sir Fergus.'

'Murder!' echoed Lynedoch with a start and an air of incredulity. 'Surely you do not anticipate anything so horrible as that? I will not believe that his absence is anything but voluntary, and that he will return when it suits him.'

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE GOLD DIGGINGS IN SCOTLAND.—Last week's severe snow storm effectually prevented digging operations from being prosecuted throughout Sutherland. Now, however, that genial weather has again set in, the diggers who had scattered themselves in all directions, Holmsdale being the chief resort, are once more running towards the auriferous regions, encouraged to renew the operations by the success which continued to favour them before the snow drove them off. Kinbraceburn, two miles from Auchintoul, was prospected some days ago, and gold found in paying quantities, similar in appearance to that found at Sieglie. From these recent discoveries it is now made clear that gold is to be found over an area of twenty square miles, and there is no doubt whatever that it exists in the quartz to such an extent as to make quartz crushing a profitable enterprise.—Edinburgh Courant.

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G. A. D. C.

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Entertainment, in the Town Hall,

On THURSDAY EV'G, 15th APRIL

when will be presented the great moral comic drama, entitled

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Or, The Irish Emigrant,

together with the thrilling recitation from John B. Gough's celebrated temperance lectures, entitled Going over Niagara Falls, by T. H. Taylor, to be followed by the highly amusing farce of

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Admission, 50c., reserved seats 50c. Doors open at 7.30, curtain rises at 8.

ALEX. F. PIRIE, Secretary, Guelph, 8th April.

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The subscribers are now receiving a large and well selected stock of NEW CROP TEAS (to which they beg to call the attention of the trade), comprising

Young Hysons and Hysons

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COAL OIL

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Guelph, March 20.

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Guelph, April 1, 1896.

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Trotter & Graham, Guelph, Feb. 6 1896.