

"Roderick! my son!"

"Father!"

He spoke no word of explanation, but I saw that his eyes were moist, while his voice thrilled with affection. I had gone through much that day, and although it is said that joy never kills, all through which I had passed, weak and wounded as I was, left me weak and faint. His coming, therefore, in such a way, was almost too much for me. Had he come in anger, and with rebuke, I should perchance have met him bravely, but to come with love in his eyes and kindness in his voice well-nigh broke me down.

"Roderick, my poor boy," cried my father, almost beside himself, "what is it? Are you worse than I thought? My God, I have killed him!"

"No, no, father, unless joy kills," and then I was able to master my weakness.

For some minutes neither of us spoke, I not daring to ask aught, or he to tell aught; but he kept looking at me with a great pity in his eyes.

"Roderick, my boy," he said, his voice husky, "will you come home, and let your mother nurse you well?"

His voice was almost piteous, altogether unlike his usual manner of speech. As I remembered the way he had spoken to me last, it seemed too wonderful to believe in.

"As soon as I am well enough to travel, father," I said. "But will you have me?"

For answer he took my thin white hands in his, but all he said was, "My boy, my brave boy!"

I longed to ask questions, but I dared not. It all seemed too good to be true. That my father, who had declared that I was no longer a son of his, should