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## MARION CAMPBELL.—A HIGHLAND STORY.\*

BY MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

"This jealousy is for a precious creature."—SHAKESPEARE.

In the present case, for instance, Marion affected an exuberance of animal spirits, depressing rather than exhilarating, to the listener; and as different from her general easy cheerfulness, as the rouge of a haggard court beauty, from the natural colouring of youth and health. She rattled on the harpsichord, with a rapidity which put melody quite out of the question, the liveliest tunes that she could recollect; sang, in a voice from which her usual arch sweetness was banished by agitation, the gayest of her national songs; choosing quite unconsciously to herself, but in a manner which her auditor did not fail to remark, such airs as she had been accustomed to sing with Helen, and those which had been the particular favourites of her brother; and when, at last, she had quite exhausted herself with the exertion, she rose from the harpsichord, and, taking up the apron that she was flowering, requested that he would read to her while she worked, as Dungallan used to do to Helen.

It was now the Captain's turn to show that a *tete-a-tete* between two lovers is not always so saccharine a matter as is erroneously supposed.

Turning over the newest books that he could find amongst her collection, he lighted upon Richardson's great novel, then in course of publication, the unknown catastrophe of which excited so much curiosity and interest, not merely amidst the flower-bed of young ladies by whom the author was surrounded, but amongst some score of persons of quality, who dispatched letter after letter, (one of them—Lady Bradshaigh—even writing upon her knees,) to ask for the reformation of the hero, and a happy conclusion to the story, with as earnest supplications, and as strong reasons to back their petition, as if they had been pleading for the rent, actual, life-long felicity of two real, actual, living and existing human beings—the strongest tribute, by the way, to the power of the book, to its extraordinary verisimilitude and truthfulness, ever received by any author.

One of Lovelace's most characteristic letters did Captain Campbell address himself to read, avoiding, with the instinct of a high-bred gentleman, all that could be painful to female delicacy, and giving to the racy wit, the eloquent sophistry of that remarkable creation of Richardson's genius, all the advantage of the most intelligent and animated elocution; so that Marion's attention was excited in spite of herself.

"What a wretch!" exclaimed she, as he finished the account of one of his most teasing interviews with poor Clarissa. "What a cruel, unfeeling, cold-hearted wretch!"

"I don't know that," replied Archibald. (Do it remembered, in vindication of my hero, that only four volumes out of the eight had yet been published, and that Lovelace's conduct was still in suspense.) "I don't know that. The lady seems to me to have been quite as cold-hearted as the gentleman; or, rather, hearts on both sides seem to have been pretty much out of the question. She, justly as you will say, distrusted his honour; and he, with at least as much justice, doubted of her affection. The whole affair seems to me a game of chess, at which—barring false moves, which it is the author's business to guard against—the most skilful player will be sure to prove victorious. All you ladies exclaim, 'Poor Clarissa!' and, if she had loved him, I should be as ready as the best of you to echo the cry. But love is synonymous with confidence, and this paragon of her sex does not know what the word means. If she had relied upon him!—if she had trusted him! One wonders that Richardson did not see how much his book would have gained in interest by representing Clarissa as enamoured of Lovelace; but he lives amongst ladies, and piques himself, it is said, upon his knowledge of the female heart; and, therefore, it is not wonderful that he should show them as he sees them, and as they are," added he bitterly, "delighting in tormenting those that love them best. Poor Clarissa, indeed! rather, poor Lovelace!"

At this moment, it was some relief to Marion, whose apron had certainly not improved by her afternoon's labours, that the weather, which had been louring all the afternoon, now assumed the appearance of one of the terrific storms of those mountain regions. The evening closed in prematurely, the clouds gathered dark and heavy, the wind moaned in gusts through the dark firs, and swept across the lake, whilst quick flashes of sharp, rapid lightning

gleamed at the edge of the horizon, and the growl of distant thunder, proclaimed, in nature's awfullest voice, the gathering of the coming tempest. The momentary passions of man were hushed before it. The lover sat, contemplating, by the fitful glare of the lightning, the fair face of his beloved, pallid and sad from anxiety and sorrow; and once again his heart smote him for his unkindness.

"Marion, dearest Marion, do not you play the distrustful maiden with me, who, Heaven knows, have no wish upon this earth but for your happiness and honour! Be frank with me, confide in me, I conjure you! I see, I know, that there is a secret that weighs upon your mind at this moment. Trust it to me, and you shall not repent your reliance. Shew me but what you wish, and it shall be done. My power in this district is greater than you know of; my intelligence more accurate than you suspect. Say only, 'Dungallan is my friend's brother, and therefore I wish to save him'; say even, 'Dungallan is my own early friend'—and he shall be saved. Only prove that you think me worthy of your confidence, and see how I will deserve it. Nay, even—although the thought be fatal to my every hope of happiness—even if his danger have revealed to your feelings hitherto unsuspected, and if, in aiding his escape, I give assistance to a favoured rival—yet, for your dear sake, to spare you the misery you would feel if he were taken, I swear to befriending him at whatever peril it may be. I am not now on service, and there is only one of those unfortunate fugitives whom it would be eternal dishonour for a soldier to preserve. For Dungallan, since your happiness seems bound up in his safety, I will not hesitate to risk rank, fortune, life itself. Only trust me, only confide in me, if not as your devoted lover, yet as your nearest kinsman, your truest friend! Speak to me, I conjure you, Marion; I beseech you, speak!"

He hung over her affectionately, as he delivered, with an earnest truthfulness that could not be mistaken, this outburst of fond and disinterested love, gazing in her face as he spoke, and grasping, with all the fervour of passion, her cold and trembling hands.

"Will you not answer me? Do you disdain even to reply to my offer of service—my most sincere and honest offer? You do! I see plainly that you do! I see and feel, too plainly, that you desire my absence; and I will no longer intrude upon your privacy. Farewell, madam! May you find a truer and a more devoted heart than that which you have spurned from you!" And, lingering a moment on the threshold, in the hope, it may be, of being recalled, he left the room.

Marion wrung her hands in bitterness of vexation. Never had her heart so yearned towards the kinsman, the friend, the betrothed bridegroom, whom she had suffered to leave her, probably for ever.

"Oh, that I dare to undeceive him! But, for his own sake, I dare not, I must not. I have pledged myself to this adventure, and I must abide the trial. May the God of Mercy—who has willed that we should assist a fellow-creature in distress, who has gifted woman with a strength of sympathy which almost counterbalances her feebleness of body—may he grant that I bear it with firmness! It is a fearful night. Janet," continued she, addressing the faithful soubrette, who just now entered the apartment, "Janet, do you fear to encounter the storm? If you do, say so honestly, and I will go myself. I have no right to impose upon your kindness and fidelity a danger from which I should shrink. There is little left, Heaven knows, that should make me cling to life. Speak frankly, my good girl. If your heart fails you, say so at once."

Janet's answer was bold and confident. And, somewhat soothed by the fearless readiness of her confidante, her predictions that they should succeed in their enterprise, and that all jealousies and suspicions would be ultimately cleared up, (for her acuteness did not fail to detect the chief source of her lady's despondency,) Marion sat down to write, with more firmness than she had expected to be able to command, the important billet to her father, which, in case of the fugitive being intercepted by the soldiers, would, she believed, from the respect paid to the name of one of the most loyal and most powerful chiefs of the powerful and loyal house of Campbell, prove an effectual and unquestioned passport.

Her letter was short and simple; stating only that, as Captain Archibald Campbell had resolved not to join Lochedon in his hunting expedition, she had sent Luath by the bearer; that all was well at the Castle; and that, wishing good sport to her dear father, she hoped to see him return in a few days.

Armed with this document, and laden with the promised provisions, the venison pasty and the whisky, ("lifted," to use Janet's own phrase,) together with a certain pair of "shoon," belonging to her lover, Donald, plaid garments of the Campbell set, and a collar and chain for Luath, the faithful waiting damsel, followed by the no less faithful hound, took the opportunity of a lull in the storm to set forth upon their expedition.

Marion accompanied them as far as the garden wall, which Janet and her four-footed attendant cleared with somewhat more of difficulty than she had anticipated, and then returned alone to her solitary apartment, to start at every sound, and feel each moment, as it passed, marked by the beatings of her own anxious heart.

Sadly and wearily the hours dragged along. The tempest had returned with tenfold violence; and Marion, as she found the noises in the castle subsiding, one by one, giving token that the inhabitants had retired to rest, and that she remained the only watcher within its walls—whilst over the pelting rain and moaning wind without, burst ever and anon peals of thunder, reverberating in awful grandeur amongst the mountains, preceded by lightning that glared with livid and horrible lustre through the room—began to feel the pressure of a close-clinging fear, a down-weighting responsibility, as the possible fate of her attached dependent flashed across her mind. If her courage should give way as she returned alone, and she should fall in the darkness from the ledge of the rock! If the springs on the hill-top should rise suddenly, and, joining the gatherings from the pouring rain, gush down the channel of the winter water course! If she should be struck by the lightning! Either of these thoughts was too terrible to dwell upon.

The distant clap of a door within the mansion, followed as she thought, (for the dizzying boundings of her own pulses, the throbbings of her heart and brain, were such as to confuse all outward sounds,) by the rapid footsteps of a man along the galleries, and through the vaulted passages of the old building, harbingered yet another fear. If Janet should be pursued! If she should be intercepted! If the stranger should be discovered! She heard, or thought she heard, the castle gate unfastened; and, the feeling of suspense becoming unupportable, she ventured to open gently the door of her little parlour, when a rush of wind, as if from an outer door left open, extinguished her taper, and left her in all the horror that a darkness as of midnight, interrupted only by the now less frequent flashes of the lightning, could add to her former terror.

The storm was at length abating. She found her way to the glass door, and opened it; and, after an interval, that seemed to be of hours rather than of minutes, she was aware of Luath, as he came bounding up the path, followed—could it be the footsteps of two persons that she heard, advancing with stealthy rapidity? A moment decided the question. Janet rushed fearfully in, dragging after her, her, as it seemed, unwilling companion; and, first carefully locking and bolting the door, and barring the shutters, an operation which, in spite of the darkness, she performed with singular dexterity, she then contrived to thrust the stranger (for it was no other) up the staircase leading to Marion's sleeping apartment, and having locked that door also, and deposited the key in her pocket, began relating to her lady, in cautious whispers, but with her usual volubility, the causes that had induced her to resolve upon the bold measure of bringing him to the castle.

They had been pursued. The rain had rendered the descent from the cave so dangerous, and had so flooded the path below, that the fugitive, forgetting his own danger in the manly duty of protecting a female, had insisted, in spite of Janet's earnest remonstrances, on escorting her as far as the wall over which she had effected her exit from the castle gardens. The light, shielded from the action of the wind by an ingeniously-contrived lantern of oiled paper, by the aid of which he had contrived to obtain for her a safe footing down the face of the precipice, had, she imagined, been observed from the upper windows of the castle. Certain it was, that, before they reached the spot to which the fugitive had insisted upon accompanying her, they had heard footsteps at some distance behind them, and had, as the clouds partially cleared away, and the moon emerged for a few moments, been enabled to perceive that their pursuer was a soldier. Janet declared her conviction that it must be either "Captain Archie himself," or the laird Donald, come to reclaim "plaidie and shoon," which he had boasted, with so much glee, of having "lifted" from her military admirer, a few hours before. Some one from the house it certainly was; for Luath had

\*Concluded from our last.