

THE CHIEF FACTOR.

CHAPTER I.

A COURT OF APPEAL.

She was an uncommon girl, and one man, at least thought her beautiful. He dwelt on the varying colour of her warm golden face, and the way her brown hair lifted with every breath. He knew the difference between her walk and that of the other lasses of Braithen—how free and swaying was her step, how lissom her body. He had watched her now and then as she sat at the loom in old Cowrie Castle, and the picture of her deft fingers, the absorbed intelligence of her face, the slow, rhythmical motions of her arms, and the sight and sound of the flying shuttle, was indelible and delightful. Since he was a lad with the sheep upon the hills she had seemed to him the most wonderful thing in the world. When he grew to be six feet, or nearly, and his shoulders became wide and body powerful, he still thought so—and he had learned a deal since the shepherding days. His admiration for her, if not generally known, was at least suspected, and by none more strongly than his old schoolmaster, who had for many years called him, Andrew Venlaw, his most promising pupil; as, indeed, the one lad of whom he had unusual occasion to be proud. The venerable Dominie, little inclined