

"I am here, father, right beside you."

"Oh, yes, yes, I know your hand. Not soft as your mother's—but it's kind—God bless you, child, I'm going—yes, going. But what'll become of my darling when I'm gone? The race all dead—not one MacAlpine left to care for my little Princess—Oh, God! Oh, God! Why should it be so? Perhaps I've been selfish—wanted you all to myself—no one good enough for my Marie! And now the punishment is come."

"Oh, it's not that! It's not that."

"But it is. I say it is. There's a man I hated—not because he was bad, for he wasn't—not because he fought for the Queen, what matter? But I hated him for the feud's sake—and because he loved my child. I know in my fever I've been mad—my brain on fire—but Marie, I've been thinking hard—and a MacAlpine living or dying should be just. I don't know where he is—and I'm so blind that I couldn't see him—nor even you—but if you love him—take him. It will not be a skylark marrying an eagle—I acknowledge it all now—but a Princess—wedding a Stuart. Give me your hand, child—your hand—Bless, oh, Christ—" And on her knees she held his hand in both of hers, bathing it passionately in tears. When she arose he was dead.

But Marie was not alone. Stuart's arm supported her, and she sobbed out her grief upon his shoulder.