

"I think not. We had, father and I, what we believed good reasons, and kind reasons, for holding our peace. But times and circumstances have changed; and, where silence was once true friendship and kindness, it is now wrong and cruelty. Many years ago, Stephen, when I was young and beautiful, Launcelot Sandal loved me. And my father and Launcelot's father loved each other as David and Jonathan loved. They were scarcely happy apart; and not even to please the proud mistress Charlotte, would the squire loosen the grip of heart and hand between them. But your father was more under his mother's influence: proud lad as he was, he feared her; and when she discovered his love for me, there was such a scene between them as no man will go through twice in his lifetime. I have no excuse to make for marrying him secretly except the old, old one, Stephen. I loved him, loved him as women have loved, and will love, from the beginning to the end of time."

"Dear mother, there was no wrong in that. But why did you let the world think you loved a man beneath you? an uneducated shepherd like my reputed father? That wronged not only you, but those behind and those after you."

"We were afraid of many things, and we wished to spare the friendship between our fathers. There were many other reasons, scarcely worth repeating now."

"And what became of the shepherd?"

"He was not Cumberland born. He came from the Cheviot Hills, and was always fretting for the border life: so he gladly fell in with the proposal your father made him. One summer morning he said he was going to herd the lambs on Latrigg Fell, but he went to Egremont. Your father had gone there a week before; but he came back that night, and met me at Ravenglass. We were married in Egremont church, by Parson Sallafield, and went to Whitehaven, where we lived quietly and happily for many a week. Pattison witnessed our marriage, and then, with gold in his pocket took the border road. He went to Moffat and wed the girl he loved, and has been shepherding on Loch Fell ever since."

"He is alive, then?"

"He is at the Salutation Inn at Ambleside to-night. So, also, is Parson Sallafield, and the man and woman with whom we staid in Whitehaven, and in whose house you were born and lived until your fourth year. They are called Chisholm, and have been at Up-Hill many times."

"I remember them."

"And I did not intend that they should forget you."

"I have always heard that Launcelot Sandal was drowned."

"You have always heard that your father was drowned? That was near by the truth. While in Whitehaven, he wrote his brother Tom, who was living and doing well in India. When his answer came, we determined to go to Calcutta; but I was not in a state of health fit for such a journey as that then was. So it was decided that your father should go first, and get a home ready