

CHAPTER II.

"Sae flaxen were her ringlets,
Her eyebrows, of a darker hue,
Bewitchingly o'er-arching
Twa laughing een o' lovely blue."
—Burns.

ON the summer eve Jean McAlpin's favorite heifer strayed, and when her other cows were milked she caught her pail, which was like a mirror with much scouring, and went liting over the braes after the truant.

Jean had "gowden hair, wi' a pickle o' red in't, blue een wi' a glint o' th' sun," milk-white skin, and lips like the red, red rose. "Come ower th' water to Charley" and "Jock o' Hazledean" floated out bravely on the air, while feet and swinging pail kept step and time. By-and-bye words and tune changed to "Co-o-o bos, coo-o-o bos—Come Bess, come Bess."

There was a crackling of dry twigs behind a cedar bush; she quickened her steps; then a crackling further off—a rushing, panting, and Bess bounded past, tail and nostrils in the air, followed close by a strange dog, snapping and snarling at her heels.

Jean whistled on the dog, but all to no purpose; Bess, as though a fiend incarnate were in her wake, went on and on.

Another whistle, unmistakeably a masculine one, sounded out through the summer air; this time the dog obeyed, then, at a word of reproof, returned skulking to his master's side.

Bess, too alarmed to notice that her tormentor had been called off, still with uplifted tail and nostrils distended, careened wildly through the bush.