

John went away half-bereft of all the comfort his mother's trust and Christine's look had given him.

The next day being Sabbath, no one felt at liberty to discuss the subject; but as the little groups passed one another on their way to church, their solemn looks and their doleful shakes of the head testified to its presence in their thoughts. The dominie, indeed, knowing how nearly impossible it would be for them not to think their own thoughts this Lord's day, deemed it best to guide those thoughts to charity. He begged every one to be kind to all in deep affliction; and to think no evil until it was positively known who the guilty person was.

Indeed, in spite of the almost overwhelming evidence against John Sabay, there was a strong disposition to believe him innocent. "If ye believe a' ye hear, ye may eat a' ye see," said Geordie Sweyn. "Maybe John Sabay killed old Peter Fae, but every maybe has a may-not-be." And to this remark there were more nods of approval than shakes of dissent.

But affairs, even with this gleam of light, were dark enough to the sorrowful family. John's wages had stopped, and the winter fuel was not yet all cut. A lawyer had to be procured, and they must mortgage their little cottage to do it; and although ten days had passed, Margaret Fae had not shown, either by word or deed, what was her opinion regarding John's guilt or innocence.

But Margaret, as before said, was naturally slow in all her movements, so slow that even Scotch caution had begun to call her cruel or careless. But this was a great injustice. She had weighed carefully in her own mind everything against John, and put beside it his own letter to her and her intimate knowledge of his character, and then solemnly sat down in God's presence to take such counsel as He should put into her heart. After many prayerful, waiting days, she reached a conclusion which was satisfactory to herself; and she then put away from her every doubt of John's innocence, and resolved on the course to be pursued.

In the first place, she would need money to clear the guiltless and to seek the guilty, and she resolved to continue her father's business. She had assisted him so long in his accounts, that his methods were quite familiar to her; all she needed was some one to handle the rough goods, and stand between her and the rude sailors with whom the business was mainly conducted.

Who was this to be? Ragon Torr? She was sure Ragon would have been her father's choice. He had taken all charge of the funeral, and had since hung round the house, ready at any moment to do her service. But Ragon would testify against John Sabay, and she had besides an unaccountable antipathy to his having any nearer relation with her. "I'll ask Geordie Sweyn," she said, after a long consultation with her own slow but sure reasoning powers; "he'll keep the skippers an' farmers i' awe o' him; an' he's just as honest as any ither man."

So Geordie was sent for, and the proposal made and accepted. "Thou wilt surely be true to me, Geordie?"