

"He'll be following his master's good example, and seeking up the brae and down the brae for you? Won't he, Mistress Janet?"

"Janet! hold your peace, I entreat you!" cried her lady, interrupting something that the chattering damsel was about to say. "Tell me, sir, and quickly, for the very moments are precious, how we can best serve you. With provisions, we can, I hope, supply you after dark."

"The tae half of a red deer pasty, sin' the gentleman fancies the meat, and a tass of whisky, gin the loun Donald hae left sae mickle in the castle, for he's aye fou frae morn till nicht," quoth Janet.

"Unless our prolonged absence should excite suspicion, there is little doubt but we shall be able to supply you with food. Linen and shoes also can be procured from my father's wardrobe. But I ought to tell you, inhospitable as it seems, that your continuance here is attended with danger the most imminent. I feel that I am speaking to one of the unfortunate followers of the Pre—of Charles Edward," continued she, checking herself, as her listener drew himself up proudly; "and it is right to inform him that he is in the very midst of Argyle's country, surrounded by enemies on all sides, parties of soldiers in every direction, and an officer in the service of the King—nay, this is no time to quarrel for a word with one who is risking much to preserve you—an officer in King George's service actually in the castle. What madness brought you hither? You must not, cannot remain here. The same accident that discovered your retreat to us, may make it known to others. And then"—

The horrors of the executions at Kennington—an account of which, transmitted to her cousin from a friend in London, she had that morning overheard him reading to her father—struck at once upon her mind. She thought of the young man before her, evidently well-born and delicately nurtured, who, for a wrong cause it might be, but still for one which he thought right, was enduring so cheerfully the extremity of human privation—she thought of him, to-day talking with her, full of life and spirit, to-morrow undergoing the fearful sentence at which her flesh had crept as she heard it; and, unable to bear the image which her fancy had conjured up, she burst suddenly into a passion of tears.

Much affected by her sensibility, the object of her generous interest laid aside his levity and his haughtiness, and explained to her, simply and gravely, that, having been closely and unrelentingly pursued for many weeks, he had taken a sudden resolution to baffle, if possible, the sagacity of his enemies, by leaving the friendly country in which he had hitherto taken refuge, and planting himself in the very stronghold of his foes. The actual spot in which he was concealed had been suggested, he said, by the local knowledge of a companion, who had left him on the double errand of obtaining important intelligence and recruiting their stock of provisions; but whose return, unless he himself prevented his arrival by meeting him at a rendezvous some twenty miles distant, he expected to take place two days after. This companion was, he added, no stranger to Miss Marion Campbell whom he believed himself to have the honour of addressing, and to whom the house of Dungallan was certainly not unknown.

"Eh, pair Dungallan!" exclaimed Janet, whose sympathy extended to all her mistress's lovers. "We ken him weel, guid man! He gied me the vera brooch that ye see i' my pladdie, in return for an auld glove that he stealt of my leddy's, forbye ither tokens. Puir Dungallan!—sae it was he that fand the cove! He kent the place laugsyne, did Dungallan; frae the time that he was a bairn, nac higher than the honnd Luath. An' ye look for him the morn's morn! Eh, sirs, but we maun pit a ewe-milk cheese an' a wheen bannocks, to the pasty—he'll be just famished—to sae naething of anither tass o' the wiskey."

"Let him not come, I beseech you," said Marion, earnestly. "His danger would be tenfold greater than yours. He is known. He is one the chiefs of the Camerons—one of the principal planners of this unhappy insurrection; and said, also, to be a personal favourite of its unfortunate leader. I have known Dungallan all my life long. His sister was my early companion and instructress. Let me not have the misery of fearing that an old friend of my father's house should be dragged from his lands to a dreadful death. If he were taken, nothing could save him. My interest in him would be misconstrued. It would be thought—Heaven knows how falsely!—but it would be thought—proceeded Marion, in a low tone, and blushing deeply—"I know that it would be suspected. Only this very morning, when I spoke of poor Helen, the feeling burst forth. His presence, whilst my hot-headed kinsman is at the castle, would, indeed, be dangerous to us all."

"As fire to tow," corroborated Janet. "Guid sirs! I had clean forgot the captain. He's ganging gyte upon that score. He gerrid the soldier lads tak auld Alison—who's as deaf as the stanes in the linn—to Inverary, to be examined, because the auld wife had a wee bit mutch of Cameron tartan, that the guidman had picked up at Falkirk, to cover her pair withered Craig. No! no!—Dungallan maunna come hither. The captain wad jalouse that he was hereabout, by instinct, ye ken, just as

Luath wad jalouse a brock or a tod by the mere effect of natural antepathy."

At this moment, the stranger—observing that Luath, who had hitherto stood quietly, and apparently half asleep, by the side of his mistress, pricked up his ears, and held his head slightly on one side, in the attitude of listening—laid his right hand firmly on his neck; and, in another instant, a quick step was heard in the glen below, succeeded by a loud, lively whistle, and a bold, manly voice calling, "Luath! Where are you, Luath, my man?" at short intervals. It was with considerable difficulty that the caresses of his lady, and the strong grasp of her companion, could restrain Luath from obeying the call. The footsteps were heard dashing through the loose, dry, gravelly bed of the wintry torrent; pausing a moment, as if the passer by were observing the marks made by the girls in their recent ascent, or as if his attention were attracted by the suppressed growls of Luath, or his repeated plunges, as he struggled with all his strength to escape from his holders; and in that moment—a moment that seemed an age—both Marion and Janet fancied that he might have heard the quick beating of their throbbing hearts. At length the sound of the footsteps died away; and the voice and the whistle grew fainter and fainter, and were gradually lost in the distance. For the present, at least, the danger was past.

After a long pause, Janet ventured a whisper. "Yon's Captain Archibald, calling Luath, pair fallow—he quiet, Luath, can't ye?—just to find whereabouts Miss Marion may be. Eh, sirs!—there'd be wild yark, I trow, gin he and Dungallan should forgether!"

Their new acquaintance appeared to feel the full force of this observation.

"Well," said he, "I must, if possible, be off to-night. Heaven forbid that I should lead my faithful friend, or you, my kind protectress, into unnecessary danger! Supply me—if, without peril to yourselves, you can do so—with so much of the commonest food as may give me strength for the journey, and a pair of shoes to guard my feet from the rocks and briars, and the tass of whisky which Mistress Janet spoke of, to drink your health and happiness—and I will set forth this very night."

"Ye ken the road?" inquired Janet.

"I have passed it once: and have learnt, in my wanderings, almost with the skill of a wild Indian, to fix in my memory the great landmarks of nature—the outlines of the mountains, the course of the streams, and the positions of the stars in the heavens; nay, even to follow upon the trail of a companion, by the aid of almost imperceptible signs—a transverse cut upon the smooth bark of the mountain ash, a birch twig broken, a sprig of heather dropped upon the path—tokens which, even now that I have indicated them to you, none but an eye quickened by keen necessity and present danger could clearly apprehend. Oh, this necessity is the schoolmistress over all others, to sharpen observation, and teach a man the use of his wits! We may dwell in a palace all our lives, and not know for what purpose our senses were given us; but turn us, barefoot and hungry, amongst these Scottish wildernesses, and we soon find that the chief aim and object of our faculties is to enable us to make a shift—in which grand art of existence I'll challenge any canny Scot, Lowlander or Highlander, from John o' Groat's House to the Tweed, It will be moonlight to-night," added he, more seriously, "and I have little doubt of finding my way to the place where I have appointed to join my friend. So now, my fair benefactress, I will detain you no longer."

And he took her hand, and bent his lips to it with an habitual grace and dignity; the effect of which was not at all diminished by his rude and squalid exterior, so independent of more extrinsic circumstances are those qualities of mind and manner—that union of suavity and nobleness—which constitute a gentleman. Marion lingered.

"The night is, of all seasons, the most dangerous to a traveller, in these troubled times. Even the fact of being out in the dark exposes the wanderer to suspicion. Could no disguise be thought of that should enable you to elude suspicion by day?—a female garb, for instance?"

"The gentleman shall be welcome to my best kirtle and bod-dice, and a hood and screen to the wale of it," quoth Janet. "Eh, and he'll mak a braw strappin lassie!"

"A woman!" replied the fugitive, quickly. "There you must excuse me. Anything but that. Braggart that I was, I forgot my failure in that line. I'll play the woman no more."

"No more!" And Marion gazed fixedly on his face, whilst a fresh suspicion crossed her mind, and the colour mounted even to her temples. "No more!"

"But he maunna leave the cave, by daylight, in a plaid and philibeg of the Cameron set. Gin he does, the captain, or the loun Donald, 'ill hoist him abint a dragoon, and carry him awa to Inverary, like pair doited Alison. There's walth o' auld tartans about the town, belonging to ae laddie or anither; and I can lift him a suit as cannily as ever my forebears lifted a drove o' black cattle," said Janet, laughing. "And then, when he has trimmed that beard o' his, whilk wad be as kenspeckle in a kilt as in a kirtle, he may pass for as dounce a Campbell, honest man, as Locheden himself."

"My father went this morning to a small hunting-lodge, and having accidentally left Luath behind, one of the lads who attended him ran back to desire that, unless my cousin should follow him to-morrow—which it must be my care to prevent—the dog might be sent after him in the morning. Luckily, the messenger met Janet before arriving at the castle, and, after delivering his message to her, returned immediately to his master; so that, if your route, sir, should lie in that direction, or in whatsoever direction your route may lie—for it will be better for both of us that I should remain in my present ignorance—your safety will be best assured by taking Luath, who is known to the whole country; and a note from myself to my father, which would be your warrant with any parties of the soldiers whom you might chance to meet. So soon as you shall be clear of present danger, set Luath free. He will speedily run home; and his appearance will be a token—a most welcome token—of your safety. Should you be taken, I rely upon your honour to declare my dear father's ignorance of this transaction. My own share in it I am ready to abide."

Once again, and with deep emotion, he for whose sake she was risking so much, and who felt that she was herself fully conscious of the peril which she incurred, lifted her hand to his lips, as she stood on the ledge of rock at the entrance of the cave, ready to attempt the precipitous descent.

"A poor and homeless fugitive thanks you, madam. The result of a more fortunate attempt may one day enable him to return, in his own behalf, or in that of him whom he represents, some part of this obligation. When that time shall arrive, send but a leaf of this flower"—And he plucked a lingering blossom of the wild brier that struggled into the cave, and presented it to her.

Marion turned towards him with gentle dignity.

"God forbid that any wild and idle words should lessen the readiness and satisfaction with which I tender my poor assistance to an enemy in distress! But if any circumstance could diminish those feelings, it would be the finding him—even in this moment of extremest wretchedness, when the blood of his bravest friends is flowing like water, and the lives of weak and suffering women are perilled, by the endeavour to save him from a similar fate—looking forward, with exulting hope, to a renewal of these scenes of agony. Oh, sir! if you be, as your words import, of high and legitimate influence with him in whose name this expedition has been carried on, represent to him the utter desolation which it has brought upon this unhappy land! Warn him against incurring, for that thorny wreath, a crown, the tremendous responsibility of another such convulsion. Whatever be the abstract justice of his claim, the truest titles to a throne—the blessing of God, and the love of the people—rest with the House of Brunswick; and he and his gallant son will find a nobler greatness, a sweeter peace, in a patient acquiescence in the will of Providence and the voice of the nation, than in efforts which can but end in the slaughter of their bravest and their most faithful followers, and in rending asunder the ties of friendship and of kindred, from the castle to the hut. Save this devoted country from the recurrence of scenes heart-rending alike to friend and to foe, and take with you my prayers and my blessings." Blushing at her own earnestness, she stopped suddenly. "I accept your flower," added she, in a calmer tone, "not as an emblem—yet, see, the leaves are already falling!—but as a memorial. Janet and Luath shall be with you as soon as they can steal away after nightfall. Farewell!"

And, attended by her faithful adherents, she stepped into the narrow bed formed by the waters, and slowly and cautiously gained the path beneath.

"Strange, yet noble creature!" muttered the fugitive to himself, as he stood at the entrance of the cavern, watching her descent. "She has not made any promise of secrecy; but one feels that a woman like that might be trusted with more than life. I'faith! one might cavy the Elector of Hanover and Captain Archibald Campbell such a subject and such a mistress. The rose was dropping did she say? Flowers are but foolish emblems. There is an eagle, one of the same sort that hovered above the vessel as we approached the Scottish shore. Tullibardine pointed it out to me at the time. That were a fitter symbol; and that sails on." And, catching, as ambition is wont to catch, at such auguries, he watched the flight of the kingly bird, soaring upward until it was lost in the distance; and then, cheered by the omen, retired into his place of refuge, with his usual *sang froid*, where, excellent, as he had himself boasted, at making a shift, he speedily kindled some dry sticks, by snapping the lock of his pistol, and setting light, by that means, to the stump of a tobacco pipe, lengthened sufficiently for use by the insertion of a tube of oaten straw, applied himself vigorously to the task of stifling the sense of present ennui and future danger, and the still more pressing claims of a keen appetite, in the fumes of the "fragrant weed!"

Marion, on her part, flushed and agitated, contrived to reach home, unsuspected. She walked straight into the small room that she was accustomed to call her parlour, which contained what little property a Highland lady of that day could call her own; and Miss Marion Campbell's possessions in that way were