

When the motor glided up before the cottage Archie looked the surprise he felt.

"Who lives here, and why have we stopped?" he asked.

But as the words left his lips they seemed to freeze upon them, for there suddenly appeared round the gable-end of the house a slight figure in a white frock with a black knitted coat over it—Mollie Jeffreys!

She went all white at sight of the two men at the gate, and Archie reddened furiously, and looked at his father with a sudden fire of hostility in his eyes.

"I don't call this fair!" he said thickly. "In fact it's rottenly unfair! I won't go in."

His father laid a firm hand on his arm.

"Ay, you'll go in, my man," said the stern old Puritan. "It's only one question I have to ask Miss Jeffreys. There's naething to be ashamed o' ye needna be feared."

The door was open. Mollie had already disappeared. Her mother was not yet back from Balquhiddy, where she had had to wait an hour for her train. A moment later the trio were facing one another in the little sitting-room where the evening meal was spread.

"Good evening, Miss Jeffreys," said Mr. Dennison quietly. "We have had a visit from your mother this afternoon. I suppose she is not back yet? This is your son ye ken, I suppose. I have brought him, against my will, as ye can see, jist to ask for my ain satisfaction with the question."

Mollie stood still, fingering the tablecloth, her eyes a little wild and troubled. For a moment not a word did she speak.

"I had no idea my mother had gone to Dunmohr," she said at last. "If she had let me know she had it in her mind, I would have prevented her, Mr. Dennison. I'm seeking nothing off you or your son."

"I understand that, my lass. But ye will answer my own question—indeed, I demand it. Was it on my son's account you left Fairburn?"

After a moment's hesitation she answered.

"Well, partly."