

looked after the retreating figure of the doctor fading among the brown hues of the moor and the shadows of the gathering evening till it was lost to view.

'An' he wad say Elspet 'll no' rise again,' he said, in mingled scorn and indignation; 'but she will rise, she will rise!' and his cry was like the cry of a stricken beast.

He walked quickly round the margin of the wood, ruminating. The forest circled round him like a finger and thumb about to meet, and his farm lay within the circle. Dr. Matthews had made his exit by a clearance where the tips almost met.

Fifty and odd years ago the ground that now grew turnips or lay in stubble had been a reedy fen, to which the snipe and heron resorted, and whither the wild duck brought her young. Around it grew tall firs and beeches, and underneath heather flourished along with rank grass. There the deer and the hare were at home, and there witches and the treacherous will-o'-the-wisp held their court. Now these doleful creatures had been driven before the plough into deeper depths of the forest; and the man a little over thirty years then was now the man above fourscore—and Elspet was not to rise any more!!

He gave an angry snort and strode across the turnips to his house. 'To say that Elspet 'll no' rise again!' he said hotly. 'I never had any faith in Dr. Matthews' skill; she'll be her auld usual after she gets a gude rest, an' as for her no' risin' again, it's utter nonsense! Of course she'll rise.'

He strode into the kitchen, ready to quarrel with the broom if it should oppose his will, and said in a hard, strident voice to the girl who was getting his porridge ready, 'An' what does the doctor say about the gude wife, lassie?' But without waiting for a reply he entered the room where Elspet lay. It was dark except for the warm glow a peat fire cast through it, and when Saunders sat down by her bedside he took the thin hand, still rough with toil, from the coverlet on which it lay into his own rough palm, and said, 'Well, lassie, hoo are ye noo?' The tone of his voice was like a caress in its tenderness. He had called her 'lassie' fifty years ago, and to him she was a lassie yet. 'Wonderfu', just wonderfu', Saunders. I didna' think I culd hae haen the patience I hae to lie i' my bed wi' nae thing earthly the matter wi' me, except tire. I'm fairly dune'; and as she spoke her eyes sparkled in the dim light.

'Ay, that's just what the doctor said; he said ye were fairly dune. But ye'll be a' richt, Elspet, when ye get a rest,' and he pressed her hand to persuade her to get better. Elspet's heart beat as she returned the pressure. They had been married fifty years, and she knew Saunders loved her, but never by word or sign had he given expression to that love. Now she almost cried with joy, and felt a sudden wish to get better for his sake.

'Hoot, ay! Saunders!' she said merrily. 'Gin I had a day or two i' my bed, I'll be steppin' about as usual; but ye'll need to gang to your supper, for I smell the porridge.'

When he rose she detained his hand for a moment, and obeying some impulse of tenderness he kissed her, and fled from the room blushing like a girl.

Next morning, as soon as he heard her move, he was at her bedside, asking, 'An', Elspet, hoo are ye noo, an' what like a nicht hae ye haen?'

She had not closed an eye all night, but had not dared to move lest she should disturb him; and he had lain awake all night listening to her peaceful breathing, and ready to spring at her faintest cry.

'I'm wonderfu', Saunders; an' hae haen a very peacefu' nicht,' she said gently. Any other answer would have filled his day with pain.

'Impm!' he chuckled with satisfaction. 'Ye'll sune be on your feet again, my leddy, feint a hair the faur o' this back-ca'. An' yet that haiverin' chield frae Glenbruar had the impudence to tell me ye were so sair dune that ye wad never rise again; but ye'll let him see another o't, Elspet. Ye see thae waikly Glen fouk may easily get turn-

ed ower; but he doesna ken us moorland bodies or he wadna crack as he does. Wi' us it's the auldeer the teacher.'

'Weel, I maun be gey teuch, Saunders, for I'm no' young noo.'

'Hoot, Elspet, dinna lie there an' haiver; ye're but a bairn compared wi' me. Wait till ye're ower the fourscore an' then crack about eld. But rest ye there an' get sune better, an' cheat the doctor for aince, while I mind the beasts.'

He did not stay more than an hour at a time from Elspet's bedside; and even when he was busy pulling the turnips or feeding the cattle and putting clean straw among their feet, his thoughts were with her; and his unshaken resolve was that 'she maun get better.'

After days of patient resting on her part, and very impatient waiting on his, Saunders saw that her face and hands got thinner, and that she looked older with each day. He came in from the fields at all seasons, and forced himself to talk merrily and hopefully, but he could not altogether hide the keen sorrow that was eating into his heart.

'Ye ken, Elspet,' he said after gazing longingly at her 'ye maun get better.' He was growing desperate.

'Ay, gin I had this tire aff me,' she said wearily. The long rest from the years of unbroken toil was a welcome thing to her, but she could not bear the thought of his anguish. His sorrow was the one thorn in her pillow.

'Ye see,' he said, half hopefully, 'the bed's the worst place o' a' for a body that has aye been stirrin'. Noo gin ye cud gather as muckle fashion as lat ye oot to smell the caller air, or gang the length o' the byre an' see the kye, the very breath o' them wad do ye gude; an' a glint o' the wid wi' the sheemin' on it wad put new life into ye, an' cheer the cockles o' your hairt as a' the drugs Dr. Matthews ever heard o' wadna do. Ye ken ye maun get better, gude wife.'

'I think ye're richt, Saunders; gin I culd get up an hour o' the day to begin wi', I nicht rax oot the time bit by bit.'

'Ay, 'deed ay,' he returned hopefully; 'but I maun awa' to the neeps again.'

When Saunders had gone, Elspet knocked on the wall with a staff, and the servant girl appeared with a look of alarm on her face. It was the first time her mistress had summoned her.

'Will I run for the maister?' she said quickly.

'No, Jessie; come in bye; I want ye to help me on wi' my claes.'

'But ye're no able; ye're wasted to a skeleton, an' as walk as a rashy wick; ye culdna stand on your ain legs though ye were on them.'

'Dinna stand there an' threip wi' me, but do as I bid ye,' her mistress said sternly; and as the girl reluctantly sought out her clothes the dying woman's mood changed, and she said, 'Oh, Jessie, wumman, dinna ye see that Saunders is breakin' his hairt because I'm no' gettin' better; it's a' to please him, craitur! Dinna greet, like a lass: e'enin' brings a' hame as they say, an' its e'enin' wi' me, noo, though Saunders winna see it. If Saunders wad only mak' up

his mind to thole the partin'! It winna be for lang!' She kept back the tears bravely.

A little later the girl ran up the field, and Saunders's heart smote him with a sudden dread.

'The mistress has gotten on her claes, an' wad like you to gie her a help across the door-stap, for she thinks a' breath o' the caller air, an' a glint o' the corner o' the wid, wad do her gude,' she said breathlessly; and so sudden was the old man's change from fear to joy that he shouted aloud in his gladness and his cry ended in a husky whisper.

'Are ye weel rowed up, gude wife?' he asked, taking her in his arms.

'I'm just a bundle o' cloots,' she replied smiling.

'Ye would be gey ill afore ye culdna laugh,' he said proudly. 'Noo, then,' and he put his arm around her, and half carried, half led her to the door. 'Tak' ye a haud o' the ither arm, Jessie. We're no hurting ye, are we, Elspet?'

Very gently they bore the wasted form to the byre. 'I like the smell o' the kye,' she said faintly. 'Noo turn me round to see the wid, an' then I think I'll gae back to my bed. Ay the wid's bonny wi' the sun sheenin' on it; an' that's the robin's sang. Ay, tak' me in.' She closed her eyes and the two carried her off and put her to bed.

'She maun rise, she maun, she maun' Saunders cried vehemently, as he hurried up the field to the turnips, and he wiped the tears angrily from his eyes. 'She maun get better! She canna be ta'en awa' an' leave me here.' He was not accustomed to being thwarted, and could not reconcile himself to it.

'I dinna ken,' he reflected, 'but she's sair dune. Hae I driven her ower hard too? Ye see she was mighty wild, an' wadna allow that she kent what tire was; an' we hae torn an' wrought a' oor days. I wrought that mare dune, just wrought her till she fell deid, an' a finer or willm'er beast wasna to be gotten for love or money; an' I aye hae regretted that. But it'll be awfu' gin I hae wrought Elspet dune, pair thing. The hairt was sair on her, an' the tatie liftin' followin' on the heels o't has been ower muckle. If only rest wad do it—but she maun get better; she maun!'

In spite of himself he was forced to see she daily grew worse but nothing would make him admit she was dying. Instead of passing a few minutes at a time by his wife's bedside and devoting his energies to the cattle he now tended them as quickly as possible, and spent the remainder of his time with her.

He leaned fondly over her and stroked her face. 'Ye were aye gude-lookin', Elspet,' he said fondly, 'an' ye hae carried your gude-looks wi' ye. Ye are as bonny as the day I married ye. And my mither cam' anower, an' said to me, "Oh, Sandy, man, Elspet's the winsomest bride I hae cusen een on." Eh, but ye were bonny, Elspet, an' I think ye are bonnier than ever. Does my rough hand hurt your cheek?'

'It wad be a strange day when your hand hurt me, Saunders,' she said. And the old woman, whose hair had grown white and thin in her days of illness, looked comely indeed. A spotlessly white mutch took away from the pallor of her face, and her eyes glowed for a moment and then grew dim with tears.

'We hae haen a sair fecht, Elspet, you an' me, and yet we hae rizzon to be thankfu'. But I hae wrought ye ower sair; we shuldna hae haen this hairt, it has been ower muckle for ye, but wi' a rest ye'll get ower it yet, an' we'll no' fecht oorsel's dune again when we hae nae need.'

'We were best to fecht awa' as long as we were able, Saunders; we were aye accustomed to work an' any ither thing wad never hae dune wi' us,' she said feebly.

'Ay, true, gude wife! an' there a gude deal of fecht in us baith yet!'

'Oh, Saunders, I'll fecht nae mair,' she said with a weary smile. 'I'm nae mair use.'

'Hoot, gude wife, dinna say that!'

'I'll never set fit on the hairt-rig again.'

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