

‘That is not all,’ continued Eleanor Maxwell drearily. ‘The day before he died he made a will. Welsh drew it up, and he and Greig signed it. It left Bervie to you, and Glengowan conditionally to me. An annuity was left to Richard. It was hidden in a secret panel in his room, and after Welsh died Greig was the only one aware of its existence. He stole it, and left Bervie without suspicion that morning. Next day Richard had a letter from him, asking him to come to Thornton Junction and buy his silence. He went, and by some stratagem succeeded in destroying the will, and the man was powerless. He told me the contents. Your wife was specially mentioned. Your mother’s jewels were bequeathed to her, with his blessing. The only consolation I can give, John, is that he forgave you before he died, and, if he had lived, he would have received your wife as a daughter. That is all I have to tell. That you will or can forgive me I have no hope; only remember my sin has been visited on my head. I am left widowed, childless, with no hope for this world or the next. Your agony, keen though it is, cannot equal mine, for it has no sting of remorse in it. In a few hours I shall be gone from Bervie for ever. Perhaps, long years after, one pitiful thought may rise in your hearts for me. Farewell.’

She gathered her skirts in her hand and swept from the room, closing the door behind her. Then Agnes rose and knelt by her husband’s side, and for