

LORNA DOONE

R. D. BLACKMORE.
CHAPTER XVII

JOHN IS CLEARLY REVIVIFIED

To forget one's luck of life, to forget the care of care and withering of young fingers, not to feel, or not to be moved by, all the changes of soul and body from large young heat to the stony lines and dry bones of old age—this is what I have done ever I can make you know (even as a dream is known) how I loved my Lorna. I myself can never know; never can conceive, or treat it as a thing of reason; never can behold myself dwelling in the midst of it, and think that this was I; neither can I wander far from perpetual thought of it. Perhaps I have two fawns of pigs ready of wool waiting for the factor. It is all the same: I look at both, and what I say to myself is this: "Which would Lorna choose of them?" Of course, I am a fool for this; any man may call me so, and I will not quarrel with him, unless he guesses my secret. Of course, I fetch my wit, if it be worth the fetching, back again to business. But there my heart is to be must; and all who like to let in cheat me, except upon parish matters.

This week I could do little more than doze and dream, and in the midst of my perpetual thought to find the way back to myself. I cared not for the people round me, neither took delight in vitals; but made believe to eat and drink, and blushed at any questions, and being called the master now, head-farmer and chief yeoman, I liked me much that any one should take advantage of me; yet everybody did so as soon as ever it was known that I was in the house, and raking. For that was the way they looked at it, not being able to comprehend the greatness and loftiness. Neither do I blame them much; for the wisest thing to do is to laugh at people when we cannot understand them. I, for my part, took no notice; but in my heart despised them as beings of a lesser nature, who never had seen Lorna. Yet I was vexed, and rubbed myself when John Fry spread all over the farm, and even at the shoeing-forge, that a mad dog had come and bitten me from the other side of Molland.

This seems little to me now; and so it might to any one; but at that time it worked me up to a fever of indignity. To make a mad dog of Lorna, to compare all my imaginings (which were strange) to do assure you—the faculty not being apt to work, to count the raising of my soul no more than hydrophobia! All this acted on me so that I gave John Fry the soundest thrashing that ever a sheaf of good corn deserved, or a bundle of fates was blessed with. Afterward he went home, too tired to tell his wife the meaning of it; but it proved of service to both of them, and an example for their children.

Now the climate of this country is—so far as I can make of it—to throw no sun into extremes; and if he throw himself so far, to pluck him back by change of weather and the need of looking after things. Lest we should be like the Southern, for whom the sky does every thing, and men sit under a wall and watch both food and fruit come becoming. Their sky is rather to them; but ours a good stepmother to us—fearing to hurt by indulgence, and knowing that severity and change of mode are wholesome.

The spring being now too forward, a check to it was needed; and in the early part of March there came a change of weather. All the young growth was arrested by a dry wind from the east, which made both face and shrubs turn when a man was doing his thing. The lilacs and the woodbines, just crowding forth in little tufts, close kneeling their blossoms, were ruffled back, like a sleeve turned up, and picked with brown at the corners. In the hedges any man, unless his eyes were very odd, could see the mischief doing. The russet of the young elm-blossom was faint to be in its scale again; but having pushed forth, there must be, and turn to a tawny color. The hangers of the hazel, too, having shed their dust to make the nuts, did not spread their little combs and dry them. As they ought to do, but shivered at the case and fell, as if a knife had cut them. And more than all to notice was (at least about the hedges) the shuddering of everything and the shivering sound among them, as if the pitiless sun, such as we make to a poor free-people when several doors are open. Sometimes I put my face to warm against the soft, rough maple stem, which feels like the foot of a red deer; but the pitiless east wind came through all, and took and shook the caved hedge back till its knees were knocking together, and nothing could be together. Then would anyone having blood, and trying to keep home with it, run to a sturdy tree and hope to eat his food behind it, and look for a little sun to come and warm his feet in the shelter. And if it did him might strike his breast, and try to think he was warmer.

But when a man came home at night, after long day's labor, knowing that the days increased, and so his care should multiply; still he found enough of light to show him what the day had done against him in his garden. Every ridge of new turned earth looked like an old man's muscles, honey-combed, and standing out void of spring, and powdery. Every patch that had rejoiced in passing such a winter now was cowering, turned away, unfit to meet the consequence. Flowing sap had topped its course; dutiful lines show want of food; and if you pinched the topmost spray, there was no rebound or firmness.

"What a good deal, in a quiet way—when people ask us about them, of some fine, upstanding pear-trees grafted by my grandfather, who had been very greatly respected. And he got those grafts by sheltering a poor Italian soldier, in the time of James the First, a man who never could do enough to show his grateful memories. How he came to our place is a very difficult story which I never understood rightly, having heard it from my mother. At any rate, there the pear-trees were, and there they are to this very day; and I wish every one could taste their fruit, old as they are, and rugged."

Now these fine trees had taken advantage of the west winds, and the moisture, and the promise of the spring-time, so as to fill the tips of the spray-wood and the rowels all over the branches with a crowd of eager blossom. Not

that they were yet in bloom, nor even showing whiteness, only that some of the cones were opening at the top, and the sap which plucked them; and there you might count, perhaps a dozen knobs, like very little buttons, but grooved, and lined, and huddling close, to make room for one another. And among these buds were gray-green blades, scarce bigger than a hair almost, yet curving so as if their purpose was to shield the blossom.

Other of the spur-points, standing on the other wood, where the sap was not so eager, had not burst their tunics yet, but were flayed and naked with light, casting off the husk of brown in three-cornered patches as I have seen Scotchman's plaid, or as his leg shows through it. These buds at a distance, looked as if the sky had been raining cream upon them.

Now all this fair delight to the eyes, and good promise to the palate, was marred and baffled by the wind and cutting of the night-frosts. The opening cones were struck with brown, in the three-cornered patches, and among these buds were gray-green blades, scarce bigger than a hair almost, yet curving so as if their purpose was to shield the blossom.

Now this I have not told because I know the way to do it, for that I do not, neither yet have seen a man who did know. It is wonderful how we look at things, and never think to notice them; and I am as bad as anybody, unless the thing to be observed is a dog, or a horse, or a maiden. And the last of these three I look at, somehow, without knowing that I take notice and greatly afraid to do it; only I know afterward (when the time of the "Castle" may not be, and the maiden was like, but how she differed from others.

Yet I have spoken about the spring, and the failure of fair promise, because I look to it as a thing of which I should come to me in the budding of my years and hope. And even then, being much possessed, and full of a foolish melancholy, I felt a sad delight at being doomed to blight and loneliness; not but that I managed still (even when no man was upon me) to eat my share of victuals, and cuff a man for laziness, and see that a plowshare made the soil, and a night-wind to spoil a dream. And my mother half-believing, in her fondness and affection, that what the parish said was true about a mad dog having bitten me, and yet saying that it must be (because, as she said, God would have prevented him), my mother gave me little rest when I was in the room with her. Not that she worried me with questions, nor openly regarded me with any unusual look, but that I knew she was watching slyly whenever I took a spoon up; and every hour or so she managed to place a cup of water by me, quite as by accident, and so I had to drink, and a little upon my shoe or coat-sleeve. But Betty Muxworthy was worst; for, having no fear about my health, she made a villainous joke of it, and used to rush into the kitchen, taking a stick of butter, and exclaiming that I had bitten her, and justice she would have on me, if it cost her a twelvemonth's wages. And she always took care to do this, and to keep me from sleeping, and to keep me in the corner after supper, and leaned my head against the oven, to begin to think of Lorna.

However, in all things there is comfort if we do not look too hard for it; and now I had much satisfaction, in my month's work, from laboring, by the hour together, at the hedging and the ditching, meeting the bitter and frosty face, feeling my strength increase, and hoping that some one would be proud of it. In the rustling rush of every gust, in the graceful bend of every tree, even in the "Lords and Ladies" clumped in the scope of the hedge-row, and most of all in the soft primrose, wrung by the wind, but stealing back and smiling when the wrath was past—in all of these, and many more, I found a cheering ecstasy, delicious pang of Lorna.

But however cold the weather was, and however hard the wind blew, one thing (more than all the rest) worried and perplexed me. This was, that I could not settle, turn, or twist it as I might, how soon I ought to go again upon my visit to Glen Doone. For I liked not at all the falseness of it (albeit against murderers) the creeping out of sight, and hiding, and the cold, and the pitiless east wind came through all, and took and shook the caved hedge back till its knees were knocking together, and nothing could be together. Then would anyone having blood, and trying to keep home with it, run to a sturdy tree and hope to eat his food behind it, and look for a little sun to come and warm his feet in the shelter. And if it did him might strike his breast, and try to think he was warmer.

But when a man came home at night, after long day's labor, knowing that the days increased, and so his care should multiply; still he found enough of light to show him what the day had done against him in his garden. Every ridge of new turned earth looked like an old man's muscles, honey-combed, and standing out void of spring, and powdery. Every patch that had rejoiced in passing such a winter now was cowering, turned away, unfit to meet the consequence. Flowing sap had topped its course; dutiful lines show want of food; and if you pinched the topmost spray, there was no rebound or firmness.

"What a good deal, in a quiet way—when people ask us about them, of some fine, upstanding pear-trees grafted by my grandfather, who had been very greatly respected. And he got those grafts by sheltering a poor Italian soldier, in the time of James the First, a man who never could do enough to show his grateful memories. How he came to our place is a very difficult story which I never understood rightly, having heard it from my mother. At any rate, there the pear-trees were, and there they are to this very day; and I wish every one could taste their fruit, old as they are, and rugged."

Now these fine trees had taken advantage of the west winds, and the moisture, and the promise of the spring-time, so as to fill the tips of the spray-wood and the rowels all over the branches with a crowd of eager blossom. Not

that they were yet in bloom, nor even showing whiteness, only that some of the cones were opening at the top, and the sap which plucked them; and there you might count, perhaps a dozen knobs, like very little buttons, but grooved, and lined, and huddling close, to make room for one another. And among these buds were gray-green blades, scarce bigger than a hair almost, yet curving so as if their purpose was to shield the blossom.

Other of the spur-points, standing on the other wood, where the sap was not so eager, had not burst their tunics yet, but were flayed and naked with light, casting off the husk of brown in three-cornered patches as I have seen Scotchman's plaid, or as his leg shows through it. These buds at a distance, looked as if the sky had been raining cream upon them.

Now all this fair delight to the eyes, and good promise to the palate, was marred and baffled by the wind and cutting of the night-frosts. The opening cones were struck with brown, in the three-cornered patches, and among these buds were gray-green blades, scarce bigger than a hair almost, yet curving so as if their purpose was to shield the blossom.

Now this I have not told because I know the way to do it, for that I do not, neither yet have seen a man who did know. It is wonderful how we look at things, and never think to notice them; and I am as bad as anybody, unless the thing to be observed is a dog, or a horse, or a maiden. And the last of these three I look at, somehow, without knowing that I take notice and greatly afraid to do it; only I know afterward (when the time of the "Castle" may not be, and the maiden was like, but how she differed from others.

Yet I have spoken about the spring, and the failure of fair promise, because I look to it as a thing of which I should come to me in the budding of my years and hope. And even then, being much possessed, and full of a foolish melancholy, I felt a sad delight at being doomed to blight and loneliness; not but that I managed still (even when no man was upon me) to eat my share of victuals, and cuff a man for laziness, and see that a plowshare made the soil, and a night-wind to spoil a dream. And my mother half-believing, in her fondness and affection, that what the parish said was true about a mad dog having bitten me, and yet saying that it must be (because, as she said, God would have prevented him), my mother gave me little rest when I was in the room with her. Not that she worried me with questions, nor openly regarded me with any unusual look, but that I knew she was watching slyly whenever I took a spoon up; and every hour or so she managed to place a cup of water by me, quite as by accident, and so I had to drink, and a little upon my shoe or coat-sleeve. But Betty Muxworthy was worst; for, having no fear about my health, she made a villainous joke of it, and used to rush into the kitchen, taking a stick of butter, and exclaiming that I had bitten her, and justice she would have on me, if it cost her a twelvemonth's wages. And she always took care to do this, and to keep me from sleeping, and to keep me in the corner after supper, and leaned my head against the oven, to begin to think of Lorna.

However, in all things there is comfort if we do not look too hard for it; and now I had much satisfaction, in my month's work, from laboring, by the hour together, at the hedging and the ditching, meeting the bitter and frosty face, feeling my strength increase, and hoping that some one would be proud of it. In the rustling rush of every gust, in the graceful bend of every tree, even in the "Lords and Ladies" clumped in the scope of the hedge-row, and most of all in the soft primrose, wrung by the wind, but stealing back and smiling when the wrath was past—in all of these, and many more, I found a cheering ecstasy, delicious pang of Lorna.

But however cold the weather was, and however hard the wind blew, one thing (more than all the rest) worried and perplexed me. This was, that I could not settle, turn, or twist it as I might, how soon I ought to go again upon my visit to Glen Doone. For I liked not at all the falseness of it (albeit against murderers) the creeping out of sight, and hiding, and the cold, and the pitiless east wind came through all, and took and shook the caved hedge back till its knees were knocking together, and nothing could be together. Then would anyone having blood, and trying to keep home with it, run to a sturdy tree and hope to eat his food behind it, and look for a little sun to come and warm his feet in the shelter. And if it did him might strike his breast, and try to think he was warmer.

But when a man came home at night, after long day's labor, knowing that the days increased, and so his care should multiply; still he found enough of light to show him what the day had done against him in his garden. Every ridge of new turned earth looked like an old man's muscles, honey-combed, and standing out void of spring, and powdery. Every patch that had rejoiced in passing such a winter now was cowering, turned away, unfit to meet the consequence. Flowing sap had topped its course; dutiful lines show want of food; and if you pinched the topmost spray, there was no rebound or firmness.

"What a good deal, in a quiet way—when people ask us about them, of some fine, upstanding pear-trees grafted by my grandfather, who had been very greatly respected. And he got those grafts by sheltering a poor Italian soldier, in the time of James the First, a man who never could do enough to show his grateful memories. How he came to our place is a very difficult story which I never understood rightly, having heard it from my mother. At any rate, there the pear-trees were, and there they are to this very day; and I wish every one could taste their fruit, old as they are, and rugged."

Now these fine trees had taken advantage of the west winds, and the moisture, and the promise of the spring-time, so as to fill the tips of the spray-wood and the rowels all over the branches with a crowd of eager blossom. Not

that they were yet in bloom, nor even showing whiteness, only that some of the cones were opening at the top, and the sap which plucked them; and there you might count, perhaps a dozen knobs, like very little buttons, but grooved, and lined, and huddling close, to make room for one another. And among these buds were gray-green blades, scarce bigger than a hair almost, yet curving so as if their purpose was to shield the blossom.

Other of the spur-points, standing on the other wood, where the sap was not so eager, had not burst their tunics yet, but were flayed and naked with light, casting off the husk of brown in three-cornered patches as I have seen Scotchman's plaid, or as his leg shows through it. These buds at a distance, looked as if the sky had been raining cream upon them.

Now all this fair delight to the eyes, and good promise to the palate, was marred and baffled by the wind and cutting of the night-frosts. The opening cones were struck with brown, in the three-cornered patches, and among these buds were gray-green blades, scarce bigger than a hair almost, yet curving so as if their purpose was to shield the blossom.

Now this I have not told because I know the way to do it, for that I do not, neither yet have seen a man who did know. It is wonderful how we look at things, and never think to notice them; and I am as bad as anybody, unless the thing to be observed is a dog, or a horse, or a maiden. And the last of these three I look at, somehow, without knowing that I take notice and greatly afraid to do it; only I know afterward (when the time of the "Castle" may not be, and the maiden was like, but how she differed from others.

Yet I have spoken about the spring, and the failure of fair promise, because I look to it as a thing of which I should come to me in the budding of my years and hope. And even then, being much possessed, and full of a foolish melancholy, I felt a sad delight at being doomed to blight and loneliness; not but that I managed still (even when no man was upon me) to eat my share of victuals, and cuff a man for laziness, and see that a plowshare made the soil, and a night-wind to spoil a dream. And my mother half-believing, in her fondness and affection, that what the parish said was true about a mad dog having bitten me, and yet saying that it must be (because, as she said, God would have prevented him), my mother gave me little rest when I was in the room with her. Not that she worried me with questions, nor openly regarded me with any unusual look, but that I knew she was watching slyly whenever I took a spoon up; and every hour or so she managed to place a cup of water by me, quite as by accident, and so I had to drink, and a little upon my shoe or coat-sleeve. But Betty Muxworthy was worst; for, having no fear about my health, she made a villainous joke of it, and used to rush into the kitchen, taking a stick of butter, and exclaiming that I had bitten her, and justice she would have on me, if it cost her a twelvemonth's wages. And she always took care to do this, and to keep me from sleeping, and to keep me in the corner after supper, and leaned my head against the oven, to begin to think of Lorna.

However, in all things there is comfort if we do not look too hard for it; and now I had much satisfaction, in my month's work, from laboring, by the hour together, at the hedging and the ditching, meeting the bitter and frosty face, feeling my strength increase, and hoping that some one would be proud of it. In the rustling rush of every gust, in the graceful bend of every tree, even in the "Lords and Ladies" clumped in the scope of the hedge-row, and most of all in the soft primrose, wrung by the wind, but stealing back and smiling when the wrath was past—in all of these, and many more, I found a cheering ecstasy, delicious pang of Lorna.

But however cold the weather was, and however hard the wind blew, one thing (more than all the rest) worried and perplexed me. This was, that I could not settle, turn, or twist it as I might, how soon I ought to go again upon my visit to Glen Doone. For I liked not at all the falseness of it (albeit against murderers) the creeping out of sight, and hiding, and the cold, and the pitiless east wind came through all, and took and shook the caved hedge back till its knees were knocking together, and nothing could be together. Then would anyone having blood, and trying to keep home with it, run to a sturdy tree and hope to eat his food behind it, and look for a little sun to come and warm his feet in the shelter. And if it did him might strike his breast, and try to think he was warmer.

But when a man came home at night, after long day's labor, knowing that the days increased, and so his care should multiply; still he found enough of light to show him what the day had done against him in his garden. Every ridge of new turned earth looked like an old man's muscles, honey-combed, and standing out void of spring, and powdery. Every patch that had rejoiced in passing such a winter now was cowering, turned away, unfit to meet the consequence. Flowing sap had topped its course; dutiful lines show want of food; and if you pinched the topmost spray, there was no rebound or firmness.

"What a good deal, in a quiet way—when people ask us about them, of some fine, upstanding pear-trees grafted by my grandfather, who had been very greatly respected. And he got those grafts by sheltering a poor Italian soldier, in the time of James the First, a man who never could do enough to show his grateful memories. How he came to our place is a very difficult story which I never understood rightly, having heard it from my mother. At any rate, there the pear-trees were, and there they are to this very day; and I wish every one could taste their fruit, old as they are, and rugged."

Now these fine trees had taken advantage of the west winds, and the moisture, and the promise of the spring-time, so as to fill the tips of the spray-wood and the rowels all over the branches with a crowd of eager blossom. Not

that they were yet in bloom, nor even showing whiteness, only that some of the cones were opening at the top, and the sap which plucked them; and there you might count, perhaps a dozen knobs, like very little buttons, but grooved, and lined, and huddling close, to make room for one another. And among these buds were gray-green blades, scarce bigger than a hair almost, yet curving so as if their purpose was to shield the blossom.

of fear, after many others, that my dumb, which lay in Mother's Bible, brought in my big pocket for the sake of safety, shook so much that it came out, and I could not get it in again.

"This serves me right," I said to myself, "for tampering with Beelzebub. Oh that I had listened to Parson!" And thereupon I struck aside; not liking to run away quite, as some people might call it; but seeking to look like a wanderer who was come to see the place, and had been almost enough of it. Herein I should have succeeded, and gone home, and then been angry at my want of courage, but that on the very turn and bending of my footstep the woman in the distance lifted up her staff to me, so that I was bound to stop.

And now, being brought face to face, by the will of God (as one might say), with any thing that might come of it, I kept myself quite straight and stiff, and thrust away all white feather, trusting in my Bible still, hoping that it would protect me, though I had disobeyed it. But upon this remembrance, my conscience took me by the leg, so that I could not go forward.

All this while the fearful woman was coming near and near, and I was glad to see her, because my knees were shaking so. I tried to think of many things, but none of them would come to me; and I could not take my eyes away, though I prayed God to help me.

But when she was come so nigh to me that I could discern her features, there was something in her countenance that made me not dislike her. She looked, even when she was looking at me, as if she were looking at a man, and not at a woman; and I felt that she was looking at me with a kind of pity, and not with a kind of fear.

"Thou art not come to me," she said, looking through my simple face, as if it were but glass "to be struck for bone-lard, or to be struck for bone-lard. Give me forth thy hand, John Ridd; and tell why thou art come to me." But I was so much amazed at her knowing my name and all about me, that I could not speak a word. She looked at me with a kind of pity, and not with a kind of fear.

"I never had any wit, mother," I answered, in my Devonshire way; "and never set eyes on thee before, to the furthest of my knowledge." "And yet I know thee as well, John, as if thou wert my grandson. Remember the old Oare oak, and the bog at the head of Exe, and the child who would have died there, but for thy strength and courage, and most of all, thy kindness? That was my grand-daughter, John; and all I have on earth to love."

Now that she came to speak of it, with the place and that, so clearly, I remembered all about it (a thing that happened last August), and thought how stupid I must have been not to learn more of the little girl who had fallen into the black gutter, and who might have been gulped in her little dog had not spied me in the distance. I carried her on my back to mother; and then we dressed her all about, and took her home, and she was well, and she did not tell us who she was, nor anything more than her Christian name, and that she was eight years old, and fond of fried batatas. And we did not seek to ask her more; as our manner is with visitors.

But thinking of this little story, and seeing how she looked at me, I lost my fear of Mother Melldrum, and began to like her, partly because I had heard her grandchild, and partly that, if she were so wise, no need would have been for me to save the little thing from drowning. Therefore I stood up, and said to her, "I am glad to see you, and I am glad to see you."

"Good mother, the shoe she lost was in the mire, and not with us. And we could not make it, and she gave us a pair of new shoes." "My son, what care I for her shoe? How simple thou art, and foolish, according to the thoughts of some. Now tell me, what care I for her shoe, what brought thee to me?"

Being so ashamed and bashful, I was half inclined to tell her a lie, until she said that I could not do it, and then I knew that I must tell the truth.

"I am come to know," I said, looking at a rock the while, to keep my voice from shaking, "when I may go to see Lorna Doone."

"What a good deal, in a quiet way—when people ask us about them, of some fine, upstanding pear-trees grafted by my grandfather, who had been very greatly respected. And he got those grafts by sheltering a poor Italian soldier, in the time of James the First, a man who never could do enough to show his grateful memories. How he came to our place is a very difficult story which I never understood rightly, having heard it from my mother. At any rate, there the pear-trees were, and there they are to this very day; and I wish every one could taste their fruit, old as they are, and rugged."

Now these fine trees had taken advantage of the west winds, and the moisture, and the promise of the spring-time, so as to fill the tips of the spray-wood and the rowels all over the branches with a crowd of eager blossom. Not

that they were yet in bloom, nor even showing whiteness, only that some of the cones were opening at the top, and the sap which plucked them; and there you might count, perhaps a dozen knobs, like very little buttons, but grooved, and lined, and huddling close, to make room for one another. And among these buds were gray-green blades, scarce bigger than a hair almost, yet curving so as if their purpose was to shield the blossom.

Other of the spur-points, standing on the other wood, where the sap was not so eager, had not burst their tunics yet, but were flayed and naked with light, casting off the husk of brown in three-cornered patches as I have seen Scotchman's plaid, or as his leg shows through it. These buds at a distance, looked as if the sky had been raining cream upon them.

Now all this fair delight to the eyes, and good promise to the palate, was marred and baffled by the wind and cutting of the night-frosts. The opening cones were struck with brown, in the three-cornered patches, and among these buds were gray-green blades, scarce bigger than a hair almost, yet curving so as if their purpose was to shield the blossom.

Now this I have not told because I know the way to do it, for that I do not, neither yet have seen a man who did know. It is wonderful how we look at things, and never think to notice them; and I am as bad as anybody, unless the thing to be observed is a dog, or a horse, or a maiden. And the last of these three I look at, somehow, without knowing that I take notice and greatly afraid to do it; only I know afterward (when the time of the "Castle" may not be, and the maiden was like, but how she differed from others.

Yet I have spoken about the spring, and the failure of fair promise, because I look to it as a thing of which I should come to me in the budding of my years and hope. And even then, being much possessed, and full of a foolish melancholy, I felt a sad delight at being doomed to blight and loneliness; not but that I managed still (even when no man was upon me) to eat my share of victuals, and cuff a man for laziness, and see that a plowshare made the soil, and a night-wind to spoil a dream. And my mother half-believing, in her fondness and affection, that what the parish said was true about a mad dog having bitten me, and yet saying that it must be (because, as she said, God would have prevented him), my mother gave me little rest when I was in the room with her. Not that she worried me with questions, nor openly regarded me with any unusual look, but that I knew she was watching slyly whenever I took a spoon up; and every hour or so she managed to place a cup of water by me, quite as by accident, and so I had to drink, and a little upon my shoe or coat-sleeve. But Betty Muxworthy was worst; for, having no fear about my health, she made a villainous joke of it, and used to rush into the kitchen, taking a stick of butter, and exclaiming that I had bitten her, and justice she would have on me, if it cost her a twelvemonth's wages. And she always took care to do this, and to keep me from sleeping, and to keep me in the corner after supper, and leaned my head against the oven, to begin to think of Lorna.

However, in all things there is comfort if we do not look too hard for it; and now I had much satisfaction, in my month's work, from laboring, by the hour together, at the hedging and the ditching, meeting the bitter and frosty face, feeling my strength increase, and hoping that some one would be proud of it. In the rustling rush of every gust, in the graceful bend of every tree, even in the "Lords and Ladies" clumped in the scope of the hedge-row, and most of all in the soft primrose, wrung by the wind, but stealing back and smiling when the wrath was past—in all of these, and many more, I found a cheering ecstasy, delicious pang of Lorna.

But however cold the weather was, and however hard the wind blew, one thing (more than all the rest) worried and perplexed me. This was, that I could not settle, turn, or twist it as I might, how soon I ought to go again upon my visit to Glen Doone. For I liked not at all the falseness of it (albeit against murderers) the creeping out of sight, and hiding, and the cold, and the pitiless east wind came through all, and took and shook the caved hedge back till its knees were knocking together, and nothing could be together. Then would anyone having blood, and trying to keep home with it, run to a sturdy tree and hope to eat his food behind it, and look for a little sun to come and warm his feet in the shelter. And if it did him might strike his breast, and try to think he was warmer.

But when a man came home at night, after long day's labor, knowing that the days increased, and so his care should multiply; still he found enough of light to show him what the day had done against him in his garden. Every ridge of new turned earth looked like an old man's muscles, honey-combed, and standing out void of spring, and powdery. Every patch that had rejoiced in passing such a winter now was cowering, turned away, unfit to meet the consequence. Flowing sap had topped its course; dutiful lines show want of food; and if you pinched the topmost spray, there was no rebound or firmness.

We came here to the parting of our ways.

"I'd be glad if you'd come to see me, sir," he said, "to talk of old times. The missus'll be delighted to see you. Say next Sunday afternoon. It's lonely here, time to shout, 'Look out there, men!' at the same time pointing to a great granite block which heaved and crashed with deafening noise to the floor of the quarry, stirring up the blue dust as it fell. The pit echoed with its thunder. Horror-struck, I covered my eyes, dreading to see what I most feared. At length I drew a panting breath and dared to look. St. Clare was nowhere to be seen.

The dust cleared. I found myself as one in some awful nightmare helping with the crane. It took us one hour or more to move the great boulder from that poor mangled body. They brought a shutter from a neighboring cottage. The men stood aside, leaving me to raise the remains as if it were my right. Reverently I laid him on the bier, still feeling dazed and helpless. Was this real or was it a dream? Was this changed form in very truth my friend of long ago—changed, crushed out of all resemblance to himself, who could recognize him now? Once, we had held ideals in common. Now, the gulf of death stretched between us. Yet no; for when the body dies, the soul lives more truly than before."

It was indeed a solemn procession that silently moved across the common that fatal sunny afternoon. I hurried on in advance to break the news to the wife. How would she receive it? I wondered. I entered the cottage. On the trim tea-table, the spotless tablecloth, the home-made bread and cakes waited for the man who would never need her ministry again. The little table on the left, the cat purring contentedly on the hearth by the polished steel fender; where he never again might stand. I flung myself into a chair opposite her without a word. She had risen in her usual servile way. Perhaps it was something in my manner that arrested her. I made several attempts to speak, but the words choked me. At last, "Mrs. St. Clare," I said with quiet authority. She obeyed, trembling a little, and a look of apprehension creeping into her eyes. Gently I broke the news to her, as gently as I could, sparing her as much of the horror of it as possible. Her cheeks turned deadly white. She rose slowly to her feet, clasping her hands in front of her beseechingly; one moment her body swayed, then she fell heavily back on the sofa. Not a word she uttered. She had passed her lips. Raising her eyes, she seemed to be searching mine for the truth as though she still doubted me.

There was the sound of the slow tramp of feet on the garden path. Someone lifted the latch and flung open the door. One moment she stood transfixed; then flinging up her arms she sent up a long cry of misery and rushed madly towards all that remained of the man whom she had married, yet half-despised. I placed myself between her and the body. "Poor soul," I said, "you are not strong enough to bear it," and I forced her firmly back into her own place, limp and fainting.

The days that followed were full of agony for the stricken widow. Her husband was dead and buried, yet she seemed incapable of believing in his death. All her comfort now seemed to be to sit at my feet and let me talk to her on those very subjects which before she had so much despised. Not a word she uttered. She had passed her lips. Raising her eyes, she seemed to be searching mine for the truth as though she still doubted me.

I purposely turned the conversation to the Faith, to God. She flinched in her chair, her brow puckered, she was obviously uneasy. God and earnest faith in him were no suitable topics over the tea-cups. I even caught the flicker of a smile quickly suppressed as we talked of Catholic morality—a morality higher than any she knew. To do one's unavoidable duties in life, to be in all outward things a respectable citizen, was all that she could understand. I brought and goddess environment had produced so faultlessly apathetic a woman!

I purposely turned the conversation to the Faith, to God. She flinched in her chair, her brow puckered, she was obviously uneasy. God and earnest faith in him were no suitable topics over the tea-cups. I even caught the flicker of a smile quickly suppressed as we talked of Catholic morality—a morality higher than any she knew. To do one's unavoidable duties in life, to be in all outward things a respectable citizen, was all that she could understand. I brought and goddess environment had produced so faultlessly apathetic a woman!

I purposely turned the conversation to the Faith, to God. She flinched in her chair, her brow puckered, she was obviously uneasy. God and earnest faith in him were no suitable topics over the tea-cups. I even caught the flicker of a smile quickly suppressed as we talked of Catholic morality—a morality higher than any she knew. To do one's unavoidable duties in life, to be in all outward things a respectable citizen, was all that she could understand. I brought and goddess environment had produced so faultlessly apathetic a woman!

I purposely turned the conversation to the Faith, to God. She flinched in her chair, her brow puckered, she was obviously uneasy. God and earnest faith in him were no suitable topics over the tea-cups. I even caught the flicker of a smile quickly suppressed as we talked of Catholic morality—a morality higher than any she knew. To do one's unavoidable duties in life, to be in all outward things a respectable citizen, was all that she could understand. I brought and goddess environment had produced so faultlessly apathetic a woman!

I purposely turned the conversation to the Faith, to God. She flinched in her chair, her brow puckered, she was obviously uneasy. God and earnest faith in him were no suitable topics over the tea-cups. I even caught the flick