

"Ha, ha!" laughed Neil so loud and long that Isla at last was obliged to join in.

"I don't see what there is to laugh at, Neil, though your laughter is infectious," she said at last. "I'm sure it's an excellent arrangement, and it may at least put an end to their bickering. It got so terrible after we came up here that I had to have them in and threaten them with expulsion."

"Suggesting matrimony as the final remedy," said Neil, still choking with laughter. "This will do for Aunt Betty's supper. She sometimes says there's nothing left to laugh at in the world, and that laughter is the medicine we need."

They entered the open stable door, and Isla herself went into the stall to see whether there was a tasty bite for the horse. Neil stopped a moment to rub him down, washed his hands thereafter in a half bucket of water, and then they turned together once more to the sun.

In the open space before the stable door Neil stood and looked at her a moment with an odd wistfulness.

"Isla, let us go on the Moor. I want to speak to you, and this is a day when there is no room in houses."

She nodded, and they stopped behind a little wooden shed. The next moment their feet were on the heather, and the Moor of Silence, vast and deep and brooding, lay before their eyes.

When Neil spoke again it was just to blurt out—for he was a man of no embroideries of speech or thought—the whole errand on which he had come.

"Isla, I wanted to tell you myself that I am going to marry Mabel Dennison."

"Yes, Neil," answered Isla, and he was unable to guess from the tone of her voice how the news affected her, if at all.

"It was only settled yesterday, and I didn't want you to hear it from any chance person. We are to be married in the spring."

"I am glad, Neil—very glad," said Isla at last, and he saw her struggling with her tears. "God bless you and