

"My tongue's no under thy belt, Tulloch; but it's weel kenned that since thou wranged us thou ne'er liked us."

"Mother, mother, dinna fash theesel'. It's naught at a' but a mistake; an' I'll gae wi' Bailie Inkster, if he's feared to tak my word."

"I could tak thy word fain enough, John—"

"But the thing isna possible, Inkster. Besides, if he were missing Monday morn, I, being i' some sort a relation, wad be under suspicion o' helping him awa."

"Naeboddy wad e'er suspect thee o' a helping or mercifu' deed, Tulloch. Indeed, na!"

"Tak care, dame; thou art admitting it would be a mercifu' deed. I heard Peter Fae say that John Sabay stabbed him, an' Ragon Torr and Hacon Flett saw John, as I understan' the matter."

"Mother," said John, "do thou talk to nane but God. Thou wilt hae to lead the prayer theesel' to-night; dinna forget me. I'm as innocent o' this matter as Christine is; mak up thy mind on that."

"God go wi' thee, John. A' the men i' Orkney can do nae mair than they may against thee."

"It's an unco grief and shame to me," said Tulloch, "but the Sabays hae aye been a thorn i' the flesh to me, an' John's the last o' them, the last o' them!"

"Thou art makin' thy count without Providence, Tulloch. There's mair Sabays than Tullochs; for there's Ane for them that counts far beyont an' above a' that can be against them. Now, thou step aff my honest hearthstane—there is mair room for thee without than within."

Then John held his mother's and sister's hands a moment, and there was such *virtue* in the clasp, and such light and trust in their faces, that it was impossible for him not to catch hope from them. Suddenly Bailie Tulloch noticed that John was in his Sabbath-day clothes. In itself this was not remarkable on a Saturday night. Most of the people kept this evening as a kind of preparation for the Holy Day, and the best clothing and the festival meal were very general. But just then it struck the bailies as worth inquiring about.

"Where are thy warking-claes, John—the uniform, I mean, o' that steamship company thou sails for—and why hast na them on thee?"

"I had a visit to mak, an' I put on my best to mak it in. The ithers are i' my room."

"Get them, Christine."

Christine returned in a few minutes pale-faced and empty-handed. "They are not there, John, nor yet i' thy kist."

"I thought sae."

"Then God help me, sister! I know not where they are."

Ever Bailie Inkster looked doubtful and troubled at this circumstance. Silence, cold and suspicious, fell upon them, and poor