

tenants, where she was always welcome. I saw he suspected something unusual. He was an old man, and aged perhaps before his time, but his face was hale and ruddy, and his eye had lost none of its keenness. I walked over to the open window, and looked out, wishing almost that I had not come in.

"Perhaps you'll ~~think~~ me an impertinent meddler, Mr. Falconer," began Elizabeth in her direct way. "But really in this I can't help myself. I've just come from your daughter, Mrs. Tom Gilchrist."

I felt that the old man frowned, but I did not look round.

"She's at Flisk, and I want to know why she isn't here. Where's Mrs. Falconer?"

"She's tendin' a sick woman at the men's hooses," he answered. "Mrs. Tom Gilchrist, as ye ca' her, has made her bed, an' she can lie on't. I'm for nae returned goods here."

"Now that's all nonsense," said Elizabeth cheerily, though I am confident, had these words been addressed in such a voice to me, I should have beat a hasty retreat. "She isn't returned goods at all. It was the most natural thing in the world that she should take a longing to see her mother, to say nothing of you."