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MARION CAMPBELL.—A HIGHLAND STORY.

BY MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

"This jealousy,
Is for a precious creature."—SHAKESPEARE.

A more inquisitive race of dogs than the greyhound, breathes not upon this earth. Wanting the sense of smell which usually leads astray those four-footed people, who, like the best of the two-footed generation, have certain small and general frailties mingled amongst their many virtues—lacking that temptation to step aside from the straight and beaten path, they indulge their wandering propensities by poking their pretty noses into every crevice and cranny they can spy out, and following every indication of life or motion which their quick sense of seeing and hearing can detect on every side. Many a dance has my lamented Mayflower led me, by her vagaries in this way; and, as greyhound nature will be greyhound nature under all varieties of coat or feature, I suspect that the fair Marion Campbell found her pet Luath—rough, wiry, bony, though he was, and of the sturdier, and stronger sex—quite as unmanageable as I my fair, sleek, delicate canine companion; although, in addition to all other points of difference, the good greyhound Mayflower happened to be a lady, and we all know that "the men-folk," as a country friend of mine is pleased disparagingly to designate that important part of the creation, are pleased to arrogate to themselves a total deficiency in the great quality called curiosity. I do not see that we "women-folk" have any business to quarrel with this assertion. If they who go clad in doublet and hose choose to make over to the wearers of bodice and petticoat the exclusive possession of the great faculty which may be called the very key to knowledge, I can find no reason why we should disclaim a distinction so honourable; except, indeed, the trifling consideration called truth, may count for anything in the argument; in which case, I should feel myself bound to declare, that, according to my limited observation, the quality in question is about as equally divided between the sexes, as freely and bountifully scattered amongst all animals with any pretensions to intelligence, whether biped or quadruped, as any—what shall we call it?—any questionable virtue well can be.

That this same organ of inquisitiveness was as strongly developed in Marion Campbell's rough and faithful attendant, as in my delicate pet, was made unpleasantly conscious to his fair mistress during a ramble which she, accompanied only by Luath and her damsel Janet, (whose functions about the daughter of the old Highland chief much resembled those of a modern lady's maid,) was taking through her native glens, one fine morning in August.

Marion passed along in silence; wrapt, sooth to say—as, in the heyday of her bloom, woman, from the princess to the peasant, is wont to be wrapt—in "maiden meditation," which, in the present instance at least, and, as I suspect, in a good many others, was, with all submission to the great poet, anything but "fancy free."

Marion Campbell's meditations glanced over her mind, mingling and crossing, now bright and now gloomy, like the tartan of her house, to which, indeed, that checkered and many-coloured web, a young lady's musings, may not inaptly be likened. First she thought of a new sacque and petticoat of pale lilac damask, flowered with alternate bouquets of roses and carnations, the most magnificent habilliment that had ever penetrated north of Inverary, and of a Mecklin head and ruffles, brought her in a present by her kinsman Archibald—Cousin Archie, as she used to call him, when they were children together—now a captain in Kingstons' dragoons; then she repeated to herself certain rhymes of the ingenious Mr. Moore, (upon that thin diet did the lovers of poetry banquet in those days,) whose "Fables for the Female Sex," published a year or two before, had just found their way into the Highlands; then the form of a heather sprig suggested an apron that she was flowering to wear with the above-mentioned damask suit; then she thought of her poor friend Helen Cameron, sister of the chief of Dungallan, whose proficiency in the mysteries of the needle had been acquired in a French convent, and who had taken so much pains to accomplish her in the gentle science of tent-stitch and cross-stitch; then the horrors of civil war, the much that she had heard, and the little that she had seen, of the last year's miseries, (for the ramble of which we are speaking occurred in the '46,) came shudderingly over her mind, as a cloud passes across the sun. "Poor, poor Helen!" thought Marion, sighingly; Archibald used to be jealous of Dungallan. He had little cause, Heaven knows. I never thought of

him, except as the brother of my friend, whatever might be his wishes with regard to me; and now, if, indeed, he be still alive, he is chased like the hill fox or the hare, and has nowhere to lay his head. Poor Dungallan! poor, poor Helen! Oh, the sickening horrors of such a war as this has been!—kinsman, with kinsman, friend with friend. And now this fearful search after a vanquished enemy!—this hunting down an old acquaintance, or it may be, an honourable rival, like a boar of the field! Oh, to a brave spirit, it must be misery!" sighed Marion to herself, imputing, as a tender woman so often does impute, her own feelings to the man whom she loves. "Archibald must feel it so, in spite of his devotion to General Campbell (who has been as a father to him,) and his loyalty to King George. And now these fearful sentences!—that poor young girl who died of a broken heart at the execution of her lover! They wring one's very soul. But Archibald has leave of absence now, for the cure of that old wound at Culloden, and will remain with us during the whole autumn; and no fugitive would be mad enough to come into the Campbell's country. Then, in the winter, my father talks of taking me to Edinburgh." And the lilac damask, with alternate bouquets of roses and carnations, flitted before the eyes of the fair wearer. "No one knows what may happen in the winter!" thought she, and visions of snow-white satin night-gowns, and white and silver brocades, the bridal paraphernalia of the time, gleamed, for an instant, in her mind's eye, calling forth a blush and a smile, a look and a feeling of innocent hope, that banished, for the moment, the recollection that such things as war and misery had ever existed in this world of sunshine and shadow.

These were the musings which the pranks and vagaries of Luath had interrupted. First, he was aware of the motion of a moor-fowl among the heather, and he darted up the hill side with the speed of an arrow, giving to his fair lady, and still more to her serving maiden—who exerted her lungs most womanfully for his recovery, screaming at the top of a naturally high voice until the rocks echoed back the sound as if it had been the shriek of a mountain eagle—giving to his fair pursuers the exceedingly tormenting and provoking spectacle of moving away the faster the more he was called back. Then a deer shewed himself in the valley, and off he darted through the glen, with a rush that threatened to run down the whole herd; while Janet's shrill pipe resounded through the uttermost depths of the glen, as it had before climbed the topmost ridge of the crags. Then he contented himself with slighter deviations from the straight path, skipping from right to left, and from left to right, poking his nose into that nook and this cranny, until, at last, just as the bridal apparition had crossed Marion's fancy, he disappeared behind a small clump of brushwood—two or three young birch trees, and a plant or two of yellow broom and Scotch brier that grew on the ledge of a cliff, down which, in winter, a mountain torrent made its way, and vanished, bodily, or seemed to vanish, into the face of the rock.

The extraordinary disappearance of her favourite—followed, as it was, first by a low sound from Luath, something between a bark and a growl, then by one or two muttered words, the speaker continuing invisible, and a slight noise of struggling—effectually roused his fair mistress, who, naturally high-spirited, free-born, and vigorous in mind and body, as becomes a mountain maid, plunged, without hesitation, into the stony bed of the torrent, now completely dried up by the summer sun, and, scrambling with considerable difficulty, (for the loose stones gave way even under her light tread, and she was forced to grasp every instant at the tufts of grass and heather that grew in the fissures of the cliff, and hung over its sides, to keep herself from falling,) succeeded, after some minutes' hard climbing, in gaining the position which her pet had reached at half a dozen bounds, and found herself perched upon a narrow ledge of rock overhanging the water-course, at about twenty feet from the bottom of the precipice; hardly wide enough to afford room to the little tuft of brushwood above which the cliff rose in a smooth, sheer ascent, until it seemed mingling with the clouds. Behind this small clump of birch, and broom, and brier, and now quite concealed by the summer foliage, was a small fissure, penetrating the natural mound, through which it was clear that Luath had disappeared, and into which she also passed, regardless alike of the dangers that she might encounter there, and of the warnings of Janet, who, climbing and remonstrating with equal good will, followed her lady as rapidly as a hearty tumble, which had unluckily befallen her at the commencement of her ascent, would permit.

A similar misadventure had very nearly occurred to her fair

mistress, not aware, at the moment of her entrance, of the rapid shelving of the narrow passage into the cave in which it terminated. She recovered herself, however, and found, by the light which penetrated through the fissure, (the only light which the place afforded,) that she was in a natural cavern, of considerable extent, and immediately confronted by a young man, who stood directly opposite to her, with an air and attitude of calm determination, one hand vigorously planted upon Luath's neck, and the other grasping a pistol which he had drawn from his belt.

Both were instantly released as he perceived the sex of the intruder.

"A woman!" exclaimed he, replacing the pistol in his girdle, whilst Luath, in a transport of pleasure, sprang upon Marion's shoulder, and nestled his rough head against her cheek. "A lady, then I have nothing to fear." And, with a courtesy which seemed habitual, he dragged a block of smooth stone, the only thing resembling a seat which the cave afforded, to a level spot near his fair visitor, and entreated her to take possession of it, in an accent whose gentle cheerfulness contrasted singularly with his rude and squalid aspect.

Marion, complying with his request, gazed upon him, as he stood before her, with a mixture of wonder and compassion. He was a tall young man, of a fair complexion, or rather a complexion which, before a long exposure to sun, and wind, and weather, had been fair; and a countenance which, in spite of a tremendous length of beard, had something at once singular and agreeable. He wore an old dark tartan coat, a plaid, and a philibeg, with a pistol and a dirk at his side, his feet all but bare, and his whole appearance indicated the extremity of human privation.

"One of those unhappy sufferers!" thought Marion, as her bright eyes filled with tears. "So might my father and my poor cousin Archibald"—even in her silent thoughts, she did not call him by a tenderer name—"so might they have wandered in their enemy's country, and have hidden in caves and rocks, had the day of Culloden ended differently."

"It is only my maid, sir—one for whose discretion I can answer," said Marion, aloud, as the entrance of Janet, and her exclamation of alarm and astonishment at sight of the stranger produced a less emphatic expression of surprise on his part. "I will answer for her as for myself," said Marion, warmly.

"Heaven forbid that I should doubt of either!" responded the stranger. "Wherever, during my wanderings, I have met a woman, there I have been sure to find a friend. Pity and fidelity are synonymous with her name."

"How can we serve you?" said Marion, glancing towards the interior of the cave, where some heather, arranged with the blossoms upwards, the hardy couch of the Highlander, and the remains of a wood fire, gave token of a residence of some duration. "You seem to want"——

"Almost everything, madam!" interrupted he, gaily. "For my wardrobe, you see its condition: witness my two feet, with half a brogue between them. Never was barefooted friar in better order for a pilgrimage. And as to my larder, that is reduced to a still lower ebb, as these few crumbs may bear testimony. I doubt if the leanest begging brother of St. Francis was ever so sparsely furnished. I have been thinking, indeed, of making an onslaught upon your venison. I must have attempted it to-night, from sheer starvation, though the report of fire-arms"——

"Would bring upon you twenty armed men," rejoined Marion—"would produce instant discovery, perhaps instant death! Heaven be praised you refrained, and that Luath's curiosity led us here to supply your wants. If it had been my father!"

"Or if Captain Archibald had happened to gang along with Miss Marion the now, instead of me," interposed Janet—"which wasna unlikely, ye ken!"

"Hush, Janet!" resumed her mistress, blushing. "We have no time to waste in talk. They may miss us at home, and"——

"Eh! Miss Marion, but ye are right!" exclaimed the incorrigible lady's maid. "The captain'll miss ye sure enoo, see sune as he has dune thae weary letters. We hae nae time for clavers. He'll be seeking ye up the brae and down the brae; and the loun Donald, the captain's man"——

"He'll be seeking after somebody else—will he not?" inquired the stranger who had listened with an air of suppressed amusement, and sly, quiet intelligence, not a little provoking to the fair Marion, to the revelations of her waiting woman.