

said Benoni. He paused. Still neither man spoke.

"There have been two cowards in the world for ten years and more," he continued.

Venlaw and Brian caught each other's eyes, and sprang to their feet.

"What can we do?" questioned Venlaw manfully.

"Is there any way?" hoarsely added Brian. "Before God," he added more loudly, "I'd buy back these ten years with my life if I could. Listen to me, Venlaw. For the thing done that morning I've had shame enough ever since, and I'd not cry quits to whatever punishment might come.— But what's to be done now? There's the trouble."

Benoni came forward so that he had the two men, one on either side of him, and said: "There is this to be done, that you shake hands like men and forget your quarrel, and when that's over I have more to say." He put a hand on the shoulder of both.

Silently the two men clasped hands.

"Now," continued the showman, "there's this further to do; for it's what I've come for, and what I'll not go back without: from Braithen you came, leaving trouble behind you; to Braithen you must go back to right that trouble so far as you can. I've travelled the seas and these wild lands for this, old man as I am."

"And what can I do by going back," said Brian, "since Elsie knows the truth and Bruce knows it, and she has spoken, and Bruce and I can do the same from here?" And here he sighed, and a bitter smile passed across his face. He felt that if any went back to Jean, naturally it should be Andrew. He was sure the old man meant that, and, of course, Jean also. And so he said: "For the rest 'tis Venlaw should go back. 'Tis he that's needed when all's righted."

Benoni now saw how Brian was being punished. He had probed the heart of the man's secret. He was glad, and yet sorry too.

Here the Factor, who had stood muffling his beard at his mouth as though to blockade emotion, spoke slowly: "If there is any to stay it must be I. But, as I take it, we both should go. For I long to see the old lad once again, and there is the grave of my old friend the Dominie I'd visit, and justice to be done altogether!"

Benoni's face lighted up. He tapped them both on the arms decisively. "You will both come," he said. "For the last words she spoke to me when I stood on the Castle steps at parting were these: 'If one comes

both should, for both did wrong, and forgiveness does not carry easily across the sea.'— So, will you come, or will you stay?—both come or both stay, it must be."

"It is not easy on the instant to say that it shall be done, and yet it shall," responded Andrew.

"I am a prisoner," rejoined Brian, "and, faith! I've duty to do here, as well as Venlaw, when the chance comes again; but I'll go—and gladly—at the hour you say, if I can; and there's my word on it!"

Once again Benoni spoke. "The lass will break her heart if Bruce does not come back with you, but I fear it is not safe. For though he mightn't lose his life, he'd forfeit his freedom. But I'd give much to see the lad,—I call you all lads yet, though you are men in the full wash of years—and carry a message from him to her."

The Factor assured him that he should meet Bruce soon, and told him of the expedition against the White Hands, and of the movement he was soon to make towards Fort Mary.

The candle spluttered and went out, and only the light of the fire played upon the faces of the men. They drew about it, and smoked a pipe of peace. And the hours wheeled on, and when sleep found them Brian and Venlaw lay together under the same blankets.

While these things were happening two women sat beside a fire in Braithen, and there was bundled up on the floor beside them an idiot, who muttered to himself and blew bubbles from a basin at his side.

"Elsie," said one, "I shall always think that the poor lad here has done more for us than we for ourselves, for he it was that made us friends and killed the wrong between us, and sent Benoni across the seas." She paused.

"And sent Benoni across the seas to bring Andrew back to you," shyly said the other.

"To bring Andrew and Brian back," gravely added Jean.

And the idiot, as the fleecy spheres of water lifted away towards the ceiling, or fled shuddering into the flue of the chimney, muttered,— "Oh, ch, pretty bird, come back soon— Oh, oh, the white horses— Ride away— Oh, pretty Else!"

CHAPTER X.—THE BLOW AND THE REBOUND.

A WEEK later found Chief Factor Venlaw and his prisoners at Fort Saviour. A stout band of men had been left to garrison Fort