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DEBORAH AWE PRAYS

THOSE were days of misery for the Woman almost beyond bearing.

Upstairs Danny lay day-long with ever-growing eyes at the foot of that white bed; in the kitchen sat Robin, a maudlin heap of woe; while in the hall the Laird, grim, lonely, dumb, sat out his days with clasped hands and blind eyes.

"Missie willed him to me to mend him, and mind him, and see he changed his feet," she cried in anguish. "And how will I mend him—when he never doffs himself? And how will I mind him—when he never utters? And how will I change his feet—when he never wets them? Oh!" she wailed in shrill voice of woe, "what with him in the hall, speakin' none nor greetin' none; and Danny in the great room the same; and you in the kitchen dreep—dreep—dreeping all the while—Oh!" she cried, turning on him with sudden passion, "give over; or go and get drunk!"

"I have not the heart," said dim Robin, sniffing.

That afternoon, as the Laird kept lonely vigil in the hall, he heard a noise of secret sniffing without the door.

"Who is there?" he cried in harsh, leaping voice.

There was silence; then a voice, very small and woeful, replied:

"None, your Honour."

"Then begone!" said the grim Laird.

There was silence again; then a nose was blown, and the sodden voice again:

"It is but me, your Honour."

"And d'you hear me, Me?" cried the Laird.

There was more hushed sniffing.

"I hear ye," said the sodden voice, "but I dinna heed ye."

The Laird rose.