

Jeannie Sinclair,

OR THE LILY OF THE STRATH.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EVENTS OF TWO YEARS—ABDUCTION OF THE HEIR OF BAILEY—THE BARONET'S RAGE AND DESPAIR—HIS SUSPICION OF LYNEDOCH.

Lynedoch had ridden away out of sight, and Mark Gideon had just refilled his pipe, and was using his tinder-box to relight it, when Will Sanderson came down the slope—his eyes still blazing and his face flushed with the angry excitement caused by his recent interview with the man he hated.

'What wants he?' he asked with eager curiosity.

'You saw him, then?' said the gipsy, with a coolness in violent contrast to Sanderson's agitation.

'Saw him!' echoed Will. 'I spoke to him up yonder at the Devil's Gap. The Devil himself was there tempting me to throw him over the precipice.'

'But you didn't?' observed Mark, composedly, and applied himself diligently to the lighting of his pipe.

'Of course I didn't, or he would not have got forward to his interview with you. But I frightened the black heart in him, and now he knows me for his enemy.'

'The knowledge don't seem to put him much about, then, for he hadn't the look of a frightened or a threatened man either.'

'No, he despises me—thinks I am powerless against him. Wait a bit. The time will come when he will think differently. But what was his business with you? Watching you from the height, I could see the matter was important. I could see he was proposing something devilish to you.'

'A good guess, Will. The Devil who was at your elbow at the Gap must have struck to him when you separated, for none but himself could have suggested the deed I have agreed to do for him.'

'What! You have agreed to be the slave, the tool, of Lynedoch Sinclair—to do his bidding as a dog obeys his master?'

'No; but as the man who jumps in with what helps him to his revenge, who is the enemy of Master Lynedoch, but Sir Fergus is my mark, and the proposal I have agreed to will strike him with a crushing blow. As to being a tool or a slave, if any man had said it but you, Will, I would have knocked him down, and if what he suggested had been for his own benefit alone, and not for mine, a second word would not have passed between us.'

'Well, what is the proposal?' asked Will, with impatient curiosity.

'To remove the infant heir out of Master Lynedoch's way.'

'Ha! I see—understand—to give him the title and estate.'

'Well, that's how he looks at it, and that's how your hatred makes you look at it. Quite natural, but then my natural view of it is as it touches the Baronet, and that's why I agreed. It doesn't matter much to me who gets the title and estate. Master Lynedoch promises fair about building up the houses, and letting our tribe return.'

'He lies, returned Will. 'He will be a thousand times worse than Sir Fergus—that is, if he were to come in. But, look ye, Mark, I'll keep him out of Baileig if I should hang for it.'

'Keep him out, and welcome,' rejoined Mark. 'Only I'm as determined on working my revenge on Sir Fergus by robbing him of his son.'

'His son!' exclaimed Will with a mocking laugh. 'Yes, of course, of course. His son, his son. Ha! a thought strikes me. Heavens! what a thought it is. Oh! if I can carry it out, my vengeance will be as great as my heart can wish it. Mark, he added, turning in sudden wild vehemence towards his companion, 'you don't intend to murder the child, do you? Is that the purpose to which you have consented?'

'No; he is to be stolen and brought up in the tribe as one of ourselves.'

'Good, good,' hissed Will; and his eyes flamed and gleamed with a horrid light. 'Stolen and brought up! I'll take charge of him, Mark. Mind, I am to do it, and nobody else—you hear?'

'Hear! Do you think I am deaf?' laughed the gipsy. 'But I don't exactly see what you are up to. The brat will grow up among the other kids of the tribe, and we'll treat him just as they are treated.'

'I must have him. I tell you I must have him, cried Will, with unabated excitement. I have a special reason for it. It will help me to my revenge on Lynedoch Sinclair.'

'Be it as you will. I have no objection in the world. Only I thought the trouble would be more than you would care for. As to helping you to your revenge, I don't see how that follows.'

'I will bring him up to hate Lynedoch Sinclair,' answered Will, in a tone hoarse from very eagerness, 'and when I strike the blow, it will be his hand I will use.'

'Won't do,' said Mark, decidedly. 'Once a member of our tribe, he remains so for ever. He could not be put forth in any year as the heir of Baileig, and that I take it is the way you mean to strike the blow.'

'That the way!' roared Will. 'Think you my hate would be content with a paltry revenge like that? No, Mark Gideon, I must reach his heart; I must torture his craven soul; I must—oh! you don't know what I mean, but I know myself, and I triumph at the very thought of it.'

'No, I don't know what you mean, and I don't care either, provided you don't mean to go against the rule of our people—once an adopted Rounmy, a Rounmy forever.'

'I don't forget that, Mark, and I swear to you the boy will never know he is other than a gipsy.'

'Enough, you get him. But it will be soon enough for your purpose when he grows to be a youngster. Let him herd with the rest till he is ready to be wrought on. We don't move at all for two years. Master Lynedoch knows that as long as he needs to be carried and suckled he is to remain at the Castle; when he can walk and roll about, and before he is old enough to remember things, we nab him.'

'Who is to be nabbed?' asked a voice at this side, and the tall form of Zee came from behind a clump of bushes they were at the moment passing.

Leaving Mark to acquaint his regal partner with the compact that had been entered into, Will bounded away up the height by himself to give vent to the rushing thoughts which filled his bosom.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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Wyndham Street, Guelph } dly

Dec. 30th, 1868.

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