

CHRISTOPHER LAIRD

CHAPTER I

PAINTER'S BALD

LITTLE Dunrobin lay on the east bank of the Rydal; a grey town in winter, a fresh vivid green one in spring because of its dense growth of shade trees.

At three sides of it spread chequered patches of farm-lands, and long, wavering roads of red clay extended the short city streets until each one was lost in a forest that climbed and surmounted a horseshoe of low, rolling hills. As a lone pearl belongs to its concave, so Dunrobin belonged to its valley.

Across the clear stream, to the west, there was scant room for farming. The foothills came close to the water, and, rising at once, ran back lifting blue crest to one thinner and bluer, until they had gained the remoteness—and title—of mountains.

On the slope of the dominant peak, "Painter's Bald," so called from the nickname the settlers had given the prevalent panthers, stood a log-cabin built