

cold Scotchwoman at bottom, despite what she believes to be her 'temperament,' ye'd have fallen fast enough. 'Twas not yer ideals, my lad, that saved ye. Maggie would have been your mistress before this, if she'd been warmer. Och! I ken it well and ye know it yerself. Ye'd not have denied her if she had offered herself. However, that temptation is not likely to upset ye." He stopped for a moment and hooted on a high note of irony.

"So ye see, Bond, the mere fact that ye have not actually fallen, does not in itself recommend ye to me. What I've seen, and what I'll remember, is that ye have played me false almost from the beginning. I've known this long time that ye'd not have stayed in the house to save *me* from trouble. Ye have stayed to protect Maggie. Aye! wasn't it that? I can see ye ken the answer. Ye'd *protect* her, eh? from the man she was engaged to, from the man that ye pretended was yer friend, and that ye wanted to save from the hell of drink? D'ye not think that that was a grand way of savin' him? D'ye not know in yer heart that if ye'd gone away two months syne, I'd not be where I am now? Nae doubt, ye believed ye were doin' the best thing for Maggie. But who made ye the judge o' that? D'ye think ye know her as well as I do, who've watched her all these years? Whisht! man, I tell ye, I can read her like a book; and I know that if she'd not been dandlin' her silly little sentimental affection for yer strength, and yer good looks, and what she thought was yer devotion—a' so beautiful and flatterin' to her little vanity—she'd have made me a good enough wife, and been happy with Biddie and maybe children of her own later. 'Twas just her physical aversion, as she thought, that she could not overcome, but she'd have overcome it fast enough if she had not fancied herself in love with a handsome laddie who was always on his knees to her.

"So ye see, Mr Martin Bond, that at the end of it, I've little enough to thank ye for, and small reason for listenin' to ye, when ye begin to talk about beginnin' it